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# ROGER FRY : LAST LECTURES



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# LAST LECTURES

BY

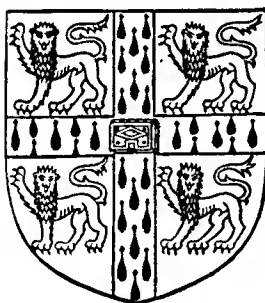
ROGER FRY

SLADE PROFESSOR OF FINE ARTS  
IN THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE, 1933-1934

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WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY  
KENNETH CLARK

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## PREFACE

This volume contains part of an unfinished series of lectures which Roger Fry had been preparing for some years before his death. He had given most of these lectures at Cambridge in his capacity as Slade Professor, and some, with variations, in London at the Courtauld Institute. Only the first of them, which was in fact his inaugural lecture as Slade Professor, had been revised for publication; and the rest could not be printed exactly as they stood, for like any experienced lecturer he had left in note form those parts which were to be spoken in front of the slides. His notes are curiously personal and could not be expanded without introducing another voice; so it was decided to put in a minimum of main verbs and prepositions, trusting that a sense of authenticity would outweigh an occasional scrappiness. The next problem was to find the illustrations referred to in Fry's notes. He had shown a large number of slides, but the text seldom gave any indication of the sources from which the slides had been made. In consequence almost a year was spent in hunting through books which Fry was likely to have consulted when he was writing the lectures. This research and, to a large extent, the editing of the text, was undertaken by a friend who wishes to remain anonymous. Our warmest thanks are due to the collectors and museum curators who helped in identifying the illustrations, and gave permission to publish photographs of objects in their charge. In particular the editor wishes to thank Dr Oswald Siren for allowing us to use photographs from his books on Chinese art.

My introduction was written some three and a half years ago, and even in this short time feelings about life and art have changed so much that I would gladly rewrite a part of it. In particular I should like to show how Roger Fry's doctrine of detachment can survive in a world of violence. In the last few years we have seen the extent to which

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political conditions can exert pressure on an artist, and we have seen a series of events so tragic and horrible that our indignation can hardly fail to overflow and swamp out detached contemplation of shapes and colours. To be a pure painter seems almost immoral. It may be many years before Roger Fry's sense of values is once more widely acceptable. Yet I am convinced that they represent a lucid interval in the history of the spirit. Montaigne lived in a period comparable in its bloody fanaticism to our own, and achieved the perfect expression of scepticism and liberal curiosity. I wish it were possible for me to rewrite the introduction from this point of view; but the publication of the lectures has been too long delayed already.

KENNETH CLARK

*April, 1939*

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# INTRODUCTION

By KENNETH CLARK

WHEN, in 1933, Roger Fry was elected to the post of Slade Professor at Cambridge University, he was sixty-seven years of age and had long been known as the best living English writer on art. Though he had never been as widely read as Ruskin, his influence on taste and on the theory of art had spread to quarters where his name was barely known. A large, confused section of the public, dimly desiring to appreciate works of art, had begun to prefer coloured reproductions of Cézanne and Van Gogh to the meagre, respectable etchings which had furnished houses of a preceding generation; and many of Fry's theories had been assimilated by those who had never read a word of his writings. In so far as taste can be changed by one man, it was changed by Roger Fry. When, therefore, he was at last given an official pulpit, his doctrines might seem to have been already well known. But Fry was the last man in the world to become set and formal. Although he was remarkably consistent in the main outlines of his beliefs, his mind was invincibly experimental and ready for any adventure, however far it might lead him beyond the boundaries of academic tradition. There can never have been a less professorial Professor. 'I must confess', he says in the lecture on Vitality, here published, 'that I have the habit, perhaps rather reprehensible in a Professor, of lecturing about subjects of which I know very little in the hope of gaining some clearer notions of them. I dare say we shall not get very far to-day, but we shall at least have looked inquisitively at a number of works of art, and we may note some rather strange facts, and with luck arrive at some suggestions of correlated ideas.' With luck. It is a form of words which seldom occurs in the pedagogic style.



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Only creative minds admit how great a part luck plays in the discovery of truth. In his course of lectures at Cambridge Fry had promised himself the sort of intellectual adventure which he loved. He was going to apply his theories of aesthetics to the visual art of the whole world, in roughly chronological sequence, from Egypt to the present day. He had arrived at the later period of Greek art when he died.

To survey the whole art of the world from the standpoint of a consistent aesthetic theory requires rare gifts of detachment, curiosity and alertness. Few of us are responsive to more than a limited number of works of art, and for those which do not interest us we are ready to adopt the conventional verdicts. We accept out of inertia judgments which are inconsistent with our real feelings, and which owe their prestige to ethical and aesthetic systems long ago discarded. Moreover we are all influenced by the archaeological values of rarity and great antiquity, and in fact time frequently does increase what may legitimately be described as the beauty of an object by softening contours, by patinating the surfaces of stone and bronze, even, perhaps, by lopping off excrescent arms and legs. The critic who wishes to maintain his aesthetic integrity must add a self-regarding austerity to his other qualities. He must also be something of a scholar: for although the language of forms may be universal, it is capable of great modifications in idiom and emphasis, and the detachment of mere ignorance is deaf to any inflection which cannot be immediately understood.

All these qualifications Roger Fry possessed. The independence and alertness of his mind were beyond question, and there can seldom have been a critic with a more universal aesthetic curiosity. No form of artistic expression was too remote, too humble or too unprepossessing for him to give it enthusiastic attention. It is characteristic of his freedom from conventional standards of value that his collection of pottery included, beside specimens of the Wei dynasty, of fourteenth-century Persia and sixteenth-century Italy, modern plates and bowls bought for farthings at village fairs in France and Spain. In his com-

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pany one felt sometimes that the proper answer to Tolstoy's 'What is art?' was the counter question 'What isn't ?' so freely could he read in every visible object the expression of a will to form. Nor could there be any doubt that he had inherited from his Quaker ancestors an austerity, which made him quick, sometimes almost too quick, to resist superficial charm. In addition he was a considerable scholar. He had not, it is true, the scholar's temperament. He was impatient and optimistic. But his quick mind cheated the wearisome labour of scholarship, and he had a good visual memory which made him, when he chose, an excellent connoisseur. Although he came to be known as the champion of modern art, he first made a name as a student of early Italian painting, and he was one of the small body of connoisseurs—including Herbert Horne and, above all, Mr Berenson—who introduced into England a more scientific approach to the history of that subject, and especially of the period popularized in England by Ruskin and the pre-Raphaelites. The two pieces of work which he himself would probably have preferred to survive from that period, the short monograph on Giovanni Bellini (1900) and the article on Giotto at Assisi (*Monthly Review*, reprinted in *Vision and Design*), are both good examples of art-research. But what gives them their value and distinguishes them from the work of a pure scholar like Horne, is the quality of the criticism, showing already the sensitive analysis of technique and construction which illuminates all his subsequent writing. These early essays differ from his later work only in that the writer does not yet insist on a coherent aesthetic theory. But the impulse to theorize, to expound ideas, was rooted in his mind, and at the same period Fry was able to exercise this talent in a critical edition of Sir Joshua Reynolds's *Discourses*. The subject suited him. He shared Reynolds's belief in the high seriousness of art and the importance of the classical tradition; and throughout his life he was never happier than when annihilating the trivial productions of the contemporary Royal Academy by quotation from the writings of its first President.

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This edition of the *Discourses* had another valuable result. It turned his attention to a style of painting—that of the seventeenth-century classicists—which gave him opportunity for more systematic analysis than was possible in treating of the *quattrocento*. Moreover, that school was then out of favour, and in the notes on the illustrations he was able to practise an art in which he was supreme—the art of persuasion. Roger Fry could take an unfashionable, a disturbing, or, most wonderful of all, an obviously boring picture, and persuade one by objective analysis that it was important. Occasionally the effect wore off. What one had taken for logic turned out to have been magic, the magic of an unusually urbane and seductive style. But this happened only when the picture was of a kind not susceptible to analysis. With painters in the classical tradition, with Fra Bartolommeo, for example, or Poussin, his skill in discovering the formal analogies and echoes upon which an elaborate composition depends, opened our eyes to beauties which lay outside the scope of casual appreciation and permanently enlarged the range of our aesthetic understanding.

The great test of Fry's powers of persuasion came a few years later when he attempted (ultimately with success) to make his countrymen accept the post-Impressionist movement. His support of post-Impressionism played such an essential part in the formation of his aesthetic theories that it influenced his subsequent criticism of earlier periods. Before his discovery of that movement his interest in the art of his contemporaries had been languid and uncertain. He had looked in modern painting for the qualities of structure and design which he admired in Poussin or in the fifteenth-century Florentines, and had found on one hand the feeble fashionable archaism of Burne-Jones, on the other Impressionism, which then seemed to him the negation of all his beliefs. This temporary misunderstanding of Impressionism was responsible for a certain delay in his recognition of the dominant forces in modern art. He had taken it at face value, as the school which recorded impressions, and had not realized that there were painters, nominally within its ranks, who had long recognized the necessity of

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pictorial architecture. We have only to look at the early apologies of Impressionism, those of M. Duret and M. Camille Mauclair, for example, to see that Cézanne was then classed as a provincial imitator of Pissarro. When Fry brought himself to look past this misleading label at the works themselves he realized that the qualities of classical order and coherence which he valued in old masters were there revealed in contemporary colour and intensity. He was immediately converted, and made up in enthusiasm and insight far more than he had lost in priority.

I need not describe his efforts to make his countrymen share his discovery. All his energy and enthusiasm, all his prestige as a scholar and his skill as a dialectician were thrown into a struggle with academic prejudice and bourgeois apathy. He lived to see a Cézanne in the National Gallery.

Post-Impressionism brought to a point Fry's growing conviction that the literary element in painting, its dramatic or associative content, was aesthetically insignificant. It led him for the first time to entertain the idea of an art depending for its effect solely on the relations of forms and colours, irrespective of what those forms or colours might represent. With his training in the art of fifteenth-century Italy and his taste for severe intellectual design, Fry had never accepted the facile naturalism of his day, and even in his early writings he had laid great stress on the non-representational elements in painting. Such a passage as the following, from the article on Giotto, might have been written at any period in his life, might even have occurred in the lectures now published, though actually it dates from 1901. 'In considering the qualities of line, three main elements are to be regarded: First, the decorative rhythm, our sense of sight being constructed like our sense of sound, so that certain relations, probably those which are capable of mathematical analysis, are pleasing, and others discordant. Secondly, the significance of line as enabling us imaginatively to reconstruct a real, not necessarily an actual, object from it. The greatest excellence of this quality will be the condensation of the greatest possible sug-

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gestion of real form into the simplest, most easily apprehended line; the absence of confusing superfluity on the one hand, and mechanical, and therefore meaningless simplicity, on the other. Finally, we may regard line as a gesture, which impresses us as a direct revelation of the artist's personality in the same way that handwriting does.'

But the same essay lays an emphasis on Giotto's sense of drama, for which the author, when reprinting it in 1920, felt bound to apologize. He can allow, he says, that 'the dramatic idea may have inspired the artist to the creation of his form', but he no longer believes that 'the value of the form for us is bound up with our recognition of the idea'. In this antithesis lies the essence of the theory which informs most of his mature criticism; though it is worth noticing that in some of his latest writings, for example his appreciation of Watteau in *Characteristics of French Art* (1932), recognition of the dramatic idea is given its old importance.

The most complete expression of his theories of art during the period when he was discovering post-Impressionism is to be found in the *Essay on Aesthetics*, published in 1909, one of the most coherent and satisfactory of all his writings. In it he goes far towards freeing the painter from the necessity of imitating Nature, but he does not completely foresee the abstract art or the theory of pure aesthetic emotion which were the ultimate outcome of his position. Instead he sees in the artist 'the discoverer of those emotional elements inherent in natural form which can be made the basis of a design'; and a list of these elements shows that he conceived them as similar to the 'ideated sensations' invented by Hildebrandt and developed by Mr Berenson.

In the same essay, however, he states the theory which was to remain the foundation of his subsequent writings on art: I mean the theory that the aesthetic attitude is exactly the reverse of the practical, that the artist contemplating an object does so for the sake of the immediate sensations aroused, and not with a view to its past associations or its future utility. 'Morality appreciates emotion by the standard of resultant action. Art appreciates emotion in and for itself.' It is inter-

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esting to find that Fry uses the word 'morality', a word which does not often appear in his later writings on aesthetics. Throughout the whole essay he is at pains to find some theory which can be used as a justification for art, and yet leave art free from morality; and this preoccupation with morality suggests to us the historical setting in which his theories should be viewed. The later nineteenth century had seen a conflict between two rival conceptions (they can hardly be called theories) of beauty. One, supported by Ruskin, maintained the inviolable union of art and morality, the other the belief that art must be freed from moral chains. The latter had, as can be imagined, less respectable champions, and less popular success, but through the unsystematic melodious pages of Pater's *Renaissance*, it had appealed to the intelligent young; and it had the advantage of being obviously closer than its rival to the facts of experience. Whistler's *Ten O'clock Lecture* by attacking, and Tolstoy's *What is Art* by defending had shown, in very different ways, that the moralistic theory of art could be made to look ridiculous. In a sense, therefore, Fry was only giving systematic statement to ideas which had long been current in the parrot cry of 'art for art's sake'. But his deliberate candour and his constant appeal to experience are so different from the paradoxical and poetical treatment of his predecessors, that the general impression of his essay is one of great originality; and, gradually, as he explored his position, he found it to contain implications which had not hitherto been developed.

The most important of these is the idea of the pure artist and the pure aesthetic sensation, terms which at one time appeared very frequently in his writings, and are still to be found in the following lectures. They are, perhaps, his most debateable contribution to criticism. Purity is a dangerous word to apply to such a complex and vital matter as art unless it is used simply as an instrument of analysis, and although Fry was conscious of this danger I do not think he always avoided it. He sometimes gave the impression, to a casual reader at least, that a work of art could be perfectly pure, by which he meant that it could appeal solely and directly to a special kind of perception, as

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different from our ordinary perceptions as the sensitivity of wireless is different from our ordinary sense of hearing. And he seems to imply that this purity is a desirable end to which all works of art should aspire. The danger of his position was brought home to him when it was attacked by Mr I. A. Richards in his *Principles of Literary Criticism*,<sup>1</sup> and Fry's defence<sup>2</sup> may be taken as his last word on the aesthetic theory which underlay his later historical and critical writings. He insists on his distinction between pure and impure works of art. 'It in no wise invalidates this conception', he says, 'if such a thing as an absolutely pure work of art has never been created: the contention is that some works approximate much more nearly than others to this ideal construction.' He then appeals to his own experiences before works of art of all kinds and says: 'The crucial fact which appears to me to arise from a number of these experiences . . . is that in all cases our reaction to works of art is a reaction to a relation and not to sensations, or objects, or persons, or events.' So that far from abandoning his pure aesthetic state in face of attack, he has made it purer still. It does not even include those ideated sensations, or, as he called them, emotional elements of design which gave a certain material foundation to his earlier theory. Ultimately it is a mystical, we might even say a Pythagorean aesthetic. Certain forms agree, and our joy is not in the forms themselves, but in their agreement. Now I suppose it would be easy for a trained philosopher to point out flaws in Roger Fry's aesthetic theory; but he would have to remember one important fact: that it really did represent Fry's own experience. He did in fact enjoy works of art primarily for their relations of forms and colours, and he could apprehend these at once, undistracted by the numerous elements which would be the first to strike an ordinary spectator. How often, in looking at a picture in his company, I have been delighted by a pretty face, a charming gesture, an agreeable association or an unusual skill of hand, and, turning to my companion, have found him groaning in despair at the lack of formal

<sup>1</sup> *The Principles of Literary Criticism* (1924).

<sup>2</sup> "Some questions of Aesthetics" in *Transformations* (1926).

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coherency, and impervious to the ephemeral seductions of which I had been the victim. But in recompense for these salutary experiences, there were the times when a work of formidable dullness or obscurity was suddenly made intelligible by his wonderful skill in pointing out the fundamental greatness of its construction, times when one seemed to have gained a new sense, or learnt a new language. These moments remain in my mind like glimpses through a half-open door into a room full of beautiful pictures, which I shall not see again.

Relations of form and colour is an expression allowing of very wide interpretation; and it is necessary to describe the kind of formal complex which Fry preferred, since in his current criticism his theories and his preferences were apt to become involved. He believed that art at its highest was concerned with the creation of forms which should convince us of their solidity; that these forms should be largely seen and easily apprehended; and that they should be combined into a unity like that of a musical chord. In Western art, at least,<sup>1</sup> he came more and more to insist on this condition of plastic continuity and coherency. Forms must be seen as a whole. It was this which made him place the great Italians—Giotto, Masaccio, Raphael—at the summit of his Parnassus, and allow even modest members of the Florentine school a higher place than their contemporaries in Flanders. To him the Flemish passion for detail was mere description, done piece by piece, with no sense of the main relations of the forms. A good example of his formal preferences, which occurs early in the following lectures, is his appreciation of King Narmer's Ape (p. 55). 'The artist', he says, 'has seized the main plastic relations with extraordinary grip...and he has felt the transitions from one plane to another with extreme sensitiveness and stated them with a reticence and subtlety which show...how little

<sup>1</sup> In Oriental painting, of course, his love of plasticity had to be modified, though he demanded the same subordination to a dominant rhythm. While on the subject I may add that Roger Fry's admiration for Persian sixteenth-century miniatures seems to me his one and only real inconsistency. To my eye they are descriptive, decorative, finished and lacking in formal unity—everything he most disliked except vulgar.



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he felt the need to exaggerate or underline. Moreover, he has refused to add any picturesque details either to convince one of the reality of his image or as an excuse for decorative display. Think what pretty patterns might be made out of the hair or the wrinkles on the nose, here only just adumbrated, but with what extraordinary effect.' How many of us might have enjoyed the pretty patterns on the ape's nose and overlooked the subtlety of transition from one plane to another.

In reading the following lectures, Fry's extraordinary sensibility to the main formal relations must always be remembered. It explains comparative estimates which might otherwise seem paradoxical or even insincere: though I need hardly remind the reader of Fry's complete sincerity in every one of his judgments. An instance of this is the relative value he places on the figures from the pediment of Olympia and some primitive Chinese bronzes. For the latter no praise is too strong. He uses the utmost ingenuity to describe the nicety of relation between the body of the bronze vessel and its neck, or even between the lid and its knob. Whereas the Olympian pediment receives several pages of very severe criticism, unrelieved by a single word of praise. The superhuman majesty of those gods and heroes could not blind him to their slackness of modelling, their lack of rhythmic unity and 'the absence of inner tension either of mind or muscle'; they lacked just those qualities which seemed to him the substance of art. We are all naturally suspicious of faculties we do not ourselves possess. The same instincts which led our ancestors to persecute saints and witches leads us to regard with alarm or amusement anyone who can derive profound satisfaction from the relation of a handle to a jar. And I confess that a few of the judgments expressed in these lectures seem to me rather fantastic. The Han painting in Fig. 195 looks to me like a scribble on a piece of well-used blotting paper, but Fry (p. 131) compares it to Giotto, Donatello, Leonardo da Vinci and Rembrandt. Perhaps in this instance he gave too full a rein to his enthusiasm (he adds disarmingly 'I do not think I am being extravagant'), but in the majority of cases where we cannot follow him I am convinced that the fault is ours. We have

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neither his sensibility to form nor his vast experience of varying modes of aesthetic expression. For this reason his postulate of a pure work of art, though of doubtful philosophical value, was a real gain to criticism, for it led him to point out those elements in a work of art which the superficial eye overlooks, and which, if they be not the only, are certainly amongst the most profound sources of aesthetic pleasure.

From the application of his main theory to the history of art, Fry drew an inference which plays an important part in the following lectures. This is the idea that art must be free. Biologically considered art is a useless activity. But, seeing that it absorbs a large amount of human energy, commands a certain respect and even affects men's actions through their imaginations, the forces of active life—the state, commerce, religion—are always trying to harness art for their own ends. On Fry's theory the use of the artist for what he calls biological ends must of necessity be harmful, since it will prohibit a disinterested contemplation. This theory he made the basis of a short history of art,<sup>1</sup> published in 1931, and it occurs frequently in these lectures, especially in those dealing with Egypt and Mesopotamia. Applied to Egyptian art it has considerable value. It explains why those long centuries of stiff academism were so seldom broken by vital works of genius. But I cannot believe that this idea has the universal validity which Fry attributed to it. He himself was forced to admit that the civilization in which the artist was apparently allowed the greatest freedom, that of Minoan Crete, produced the feeblest works of art. How, we may wonder, would his theory have survived had he lived to apply it in detail to the Middle Ages, when art was almost entirely in the service of religion? We know from the short survey just mentioned that he was at most a half-hearted admirer of Gothic art, and the merit he conceded to it he explained in a curious way. The Church, he maintained,<sup>2</sup> would have corrupted art far sooner if she had known how. 'But knowledge of the elementary crudity of man's sentimental re-

<sup>1</sup> Reprinted as *The Arts of Painting and Sculpture* in 1932.

<sup>2</sup> *The Arts of Painting and Sculpture*, p. 112.

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actions could only be attained by a long process of trial and error.' The portals of Chartres and Rheims were the errors, and it was only quite recently that the Church had evolved what the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries had tried in vain to produce, the painted, waxen, simpering *bondieuseries* of modern Catholicism.

In the face of this entertaining but extravagant hypothesis we must, I think, be aware that Fry's theory of the freedom of art was not founded solely on pure aesthetic experiences. It was, indeed, deeply coloured by his moral ideas. This interference of moral ideas was never obvious. He could look with generous detachment at works of art conceived in a spirit contrary to his beliefs. Morality did not bedaub his judgments, but tinted them with a subtle transparent glaze which is not the less important for being almost invisible at the first glance. Let me give an instance which may seem far-fetched, but which I believe is an important clue to the workings of his mind. Throughout the following pages, the reader will find a few terms of abuse recurring whenever an object meets with the author's disapproval, and amongst them he will notice the word 'finish'. Finish is used as the antithesis of that sensibility which Fry valued so highly and which he made one of the touchstones of his enquiry. Now there is no doubt that it is possible to dislike finish on purely aesthetic grounds. The polishing of a material till all trace of its true nature or its maker's hand has been obliterated is one of the commonest symptoms of bad art; an insistence on detail is the most familiar proof of a trivial and uncreative mind. But finish may also be the expression of a heightened intensity; it may be in itself a formal language in which some moods can find their only possible utterance. In condemning finish as a whole Fry was influenced by his deep love of individual freedom. As an artist he himself felt no impulse to finish and was impatient of the drudgery involved; and so at the back of his mind was the feeling that all finish was the result either of stupidity or of slavery, the stupidity of the craftsman who wishes to conceal his lack of invention, or the slavery of an artist forced by his vulgar patrons to polish away every trace of his sensibility. For, since

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the possession of an art object was a proof of power, the rich man wished to show what a superfluity of labour had gone to the making of his possession.<sup>1</sup> It is fair to add that Fry's dislike of finish was chiefly evident when dealing with what used to be called the minor arts. In a great work of art, a picture by Ingres for example, he could tolerate or even enjoy a degree of finish which would have horrified him in a piece of porcelain; and for finish combined with breadth he had the deepest admiration. I remember his delight in Rubens' *Château de Steen*. 'Look', he would say, 'at the high lights in the partridge's eyes'.

I will give one more instance of an ethical belief which had considerable influence on Roger Fry's aesthetic judgments, his love of truth. Truth is a word of many meanings, and in some sense, no doubt, it is a necessary condition of all works of art. It is in this cloudy region that ethics and aesthetics meet. But truth as it influenced the aesthetics of Roger Fry was a relatively simple concept, the antithesis of fraud. 'Useful and even necessary as lying may be in ordinary life, it is always disastrous in art.'<sup>2</sup>

The reader will easily discover for himself instances in which Fry's concept of truth influenced his judgment. He had a horror of any expression which he suspected of going further than the original emotion would warrant, and this led him to mistrust *a priori* almost all romantic works of art and to show considerable leniency to the prosaic. That the prophet of Cézanne should have held such a low opinion of Delacroix is a remarkable proof of this prejudice. And his love of truth can also be felt in his use of the word 'decorative'. At first sight it is rather surprising to find that throughout the following lectures 'decorative' is used in an unfavourable sense. We might have expected that a decorative, as opposed to an informative, use of shapes and colour was implicit in

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *The Arts of Painting and Sculpture*, p. 17, which shows that the idea is taken from Veblen's *Theory of the Leisure Class*. He might have argued the exact opposite: that the rich man wished all signs of labour to be expunged from his possessions because any evidence of honest toil gave him a bad conscience.

<sup>2</sup> From a lecture on Chardin. The same sentiment is expressed rather differently in the section dealing with Chardin in *Reflections on French Art*.

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his aesthetic. But to Fry the word came to denote a trick of style by which the artist sought to make his work effective, while shirking the main issue of art, the creation of plastic sequences. And effectiveness cheaply won by the sacrifice of truth was the quality which he most disliked. One whiff of it—Gudea's eyebrows for example (see p. 67)—would taint his whole pleasure in a work of art, however sublime, and when this style was freely used, as in the Assur-bani-pal reliefs, he was blind to other qualities.

It is worth emphasizing the influence of Fry's moral ideas upon his critical judgments, because his theory of pure aesthetic reactions might give those who did not know him a very false notion of his writings. It conjures up a picture of a robot critic—cold, passionless, remote—which is ludicrously far from the truth. Though he often achieved intellectual detachment, he never succeeded in banishing his sense of right and wrong. He was easily moved to pity and indignation, and his criticism, far from being the graph of an aesthetic recording-machine, is the revelation of a rich and lovable personality.

I have called these lectures an intellectual adventure, and I do not think Fry would have objected to this expression, though he might have preferred 'experiment', a word to which his early training as a scientist had given a slightly magical potency. The importance of an experimental attitude is, indeed, the theme of his inaugural lecture. He begins by showing how the attempt to lay down fixed objective standards of beauty is futile, and would, if it could succeed, be disastrous. 'When we ask for objective validity in aesthetic judgments, we are somewhat like the Frogs in the fable. We have an excellent King Log who lies there quite imposingly in our pond, and each of us is convinced that *if* the King ever spoke it would be to establish the truth of his own judgments. If, however, Jupiter were ever to answer our prayers for King Stork we should find ourselves . . . in a very different posture.' He goes on to show that even an experimental approach, through the comparison of our responses to works of art, is made almost impossible by the extreme

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complexity of the responses themselves, and he suggests the method which he intends to employ in the following lecture. 'I propose to narrow down our enquiry by isolating particular qualities in various works of art and comparing them with one another solely in regard to one or two qualities at a time.' We may thus check the too immediate response of "I like this" and "I dislike that", and substitute the question, "Does this work give evidence of the special quality we are considering?" No one who knew Roger Fry would expect, or desire, him to follow this scheme very strictly. He had not formed the habit of concealing his preferences, and he certainly does not do so in these lectures. He does attempt to isolate two qualities, sensibility and vitality, and he conscientiously applies this criterion to most of the objects considered: but while doing so he leaves us in no doubt as to which of these objects please him.

The second lecture, in which the quality of sensibility is defined, gives the key to the whole series. The original definition of the term, the examination of intellectual pleasure in art, and of the necessary balance between order and variety—these are examples of critical analysis at its best, revealing to us the causes of our own response. And if some of his speculations seem rather surprising, the reader must remember the words quoted in the first paragraph of the introduction. When Fry himself showed so clearly that he intended his conclusions to be provisional it would be unfair to isolate and analyse them as if they were ultimate truths. But it is perhaps worth pointing out that the lecture might have conformed more closely to an experiment if the word 'sensibility' were not made to carry so wide a meaning, if its definition had taken shape immediately after the comparison between the original and the diagrammatic version of a Paul Klee—in fact that the quality investigated had been what Fry called sensitivity rather than sensibility. By including in his definition the concept of rhythmic organization he gave to sensibility an imponderable and universal value which almost precluded scientific application.

From this point of view the quality defined in the third lecture, that of

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vitality in artistic images, is more satisfactory simply because it is aesthetically less important. We can admit that an image is devoid of vitality without condemning it as a work of art; and, in fact, Fry noted the absence of this quality in the work of artists whom he admired profoundly, Raphael and Fra Bartolommeo, and discovered it in objects for which he could hardly claim any other merit (Pl. 45). Although in the course of the later lectures this test is sometimes used with qualitative implications (as in the comparison of Greek and Scythian animal sculpture) it remains genuinely experimental; almost too experimental, in fact, for the idea of vitality as an important ingredient in works of art lay outside Roger Fry's system. The definition of a quality which involves the whole question of representation in art, and has been the subject of so many speculations from Aristotle to Lipps, needed fuller and more careful handling than it receives in the third lecture. Vitality in art is a peculiarly German preoccupation, and with German aesthetic philosophy, as with German culture in general, Fry was completely out of sympathy. And, as if to be revenged on the numerous books on the theory of *empfindung* which he had refused to read, he ends this lecture with a shrewd but unflattering analysis of that typically German contribution to art, expressionism.

The remaining lectures in which he examines the history of art with special reference to these two qualities, sensibility and vitality, require less detailed comment. The main themes are stated in the lecture on Egyptian art, and if at the end we feel that they are repeated rather too often, we must remember that such repetition is inherent in the lecture form. Radiant enthusiasm and a sonorous voice combined to make Fry even more persuasive as a lecturer than as a writer, and most of his later work was conceived in lecture form. He was an excellent natural writer—clear, witty and eloquent—but like all good lecturers he knew that the phrase of the moment was usually more arresting than a carefully balanced period; and although his lectures were the result of prolonged reflection, they were hastily written. In consequence these lectures contain redundancies and an occasional looseness of expression

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not to be found in his printed works, and which, had he lived, he would have corrected.

The sections on Mesopotamian, Aegean and early American art require no comment; but it is worth drawing attention to the sixth lecture, since Negro art provided in concentrated form the qualities which Fry most admired. To him these nameless, dateless masterpieces were as near as anything could be to his 'ideal construction', a perfectly pure work of art. They have, he says, the same sort of control of the expressive elements of plastic form as the musician has of the relations of notes; they have delicate tact and restraint; they have sensibility and vitality in the highest degree. Nothing shows more clearly the independence of his aesthetic judgments from all associative and literary elements than this impassioned admiration for the art of a people with whom he can have had no single idea or association in common. The very existence of these sculptures depended on beliefs and emotions which he must have regarded as mere madness, yet their forms spoke to him more intelligibly and persuasively than the sculpture of his own contemporaries, or of fifth-century Greece. No wonder he could not agree with Mr Richards that our responses to works of art are the same as our responses to ordinary life.

The three lectures on Chinese art differ from the rest of the series in giving a fuller treatment to the historical background. I am not competent to say how far the history is accurate, but there can be no two opinions about the brilliance and clarity with which the main issues of this long and complex period are brought before us. In particular, the outside influences on Chinese art, involving digressions on the Scythian style and Hellenistic Buddhism, are treated with a mastery which shows what a fine historian of art he would have been had he chosen to devote continuous attention to the subject. It is in these lectures that Fry's enthusiasm finds its fullest and most varied expression. Like all good critics he was continually falling in love with a style or an artist, and while the fit was on he could find all his ideal qualities in the mistress of the moment. It is fair to add that although his passion



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might cool, it seldom evaporated altogether, and in consequence the range of his affections was continually widening. Chinese art of the Buddhist period was an old flame, but in the last years of his life it had been supplanted by an infatuation for the bronzes of the Yin and Chou dynasties. In consequence the section dealing with this period may seem disproportionately long; especially as Chinese archaeology has made considerable advances since Fry wrote. But although more is known about the subject, no one else has studied it in relation to such a wide background of aesthetic experience.

The lectures on Greek art are amongst the most interesting of all Fry's later writings. They reverse accepted values; but they do so in a manner very different from the familiar attempts to debunk a canonized subject. Far from questioning the greatness of the Greek intellect they insist that it was this very quality, this unique blend of curiosity and the power of generalization, which prohibited the free functioning of plastic sensibility. For to such a sensibility the apprehension of formal relations was immediate and instinctive, whereas the Greek approach to form was conceptual and geometric. He had already pointed out in the lecture on Egyptian art that such a conceptual approach was essentially literary, and this objection was, of course, even more relevant to the Greeks. It is here that Fry's theory of a pure aesthetic response is seen at its most austere, for he will make no concessions whatsoever on account of the unequalled greatness of Greek literature. Our first reactions to such a theory must, I think, be unfavourable. We can with difficulty admit that the genius of Aeschylus and Sophocles, Pindar and Plato should have left no mark on the visual arts. But put Shakespeare for Sophocles, Milton for Pindar, Hume and Berkeley for Plato, and what reflection does English painting show of all this marvellous array of national talent? No doubt Fry was right to insist that a people could achieve the highest degree of culture without having any instinctive sense of plastic expression. Yet even on this ground his case against Greek art is far from convincing. Greece and England do not present a parallel. The English are so

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unusually devoid of plastic sense that they have not even attempted to realize in form the moods and ideas of their more important poets and philosophers; whereas the Greeks did continually make such an attempt, and from this point of view Fry never denied their success. He granted that Greek sculpture expressed the high moral and imaginative qualities which illuminate their other activities, yet denied it aesthetic value. Such was the logical outcome, some may think the *reductio ad absurdum*, of the pure aesthetic response.

I have already hinted that this theory in its more severe forms does not seem to cover the whole range of responsiveness as I am aware of it. As applied to Greek art it has for me a double weakness. In the first place, the magnificent imagery of Greek sculpture, the actual choice and treatment of the subjects, seems to me an integral part of its aesthetic effect; and secondly, I feel that Fry underrated the value of the forms themselves. We may agree that vitality is a secondary aim in much of the Greek art which has come down to us—the work of those sculptors who were chiefly preoccupied with it, Myron for example, having wholly disappeared. And we may agree that an art which is chiefly known to us through copies cannot, on Fry's own definition, show great evidence of sensibility. But in the few originals which remain, defaced, discoloured, selected for us by a blind chance, there is surely evidence enough of plastic power and sensibility. Perhaps he is right in saying the Greeks lack the art of building up large and complex compositions: but in smaller formal constructions they achieved a finality which, more than anything else, has contributed to the prestige of Greek art. It was this finality and completeness, perceptible in the meanest and smallest copies, which led the men of the Renaissance to look upon antique art as a repertory of formal motives. When we remember that both Rubens and Poussin made careful copies of every antique gem they came across in order to utilise the motives in their own compositions, we cannot believe that the authority of Greek art depended simply on its reflection of Greek literature.

But although it can hardly be swallowed whole, Fry's view of

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Greek art contains many valuable truths. In particular, his low estimate of the archaic style is a valuable antidote to a snobbish movement in taste which has had a bad effect on modern sculpture. We flatter ourselves that we are no longer deceived by the rubbed down and restored fragments of copies which were the pride of our ancestors. But as works of art they could hardly be worse than some of the sixth-century Apollos which the fashion for archaism has persuaded us to admire. I remember with real relief the moment when it was no longer necessary to simulate admiration for those stiff, swollen, grinning monsters, and I believe that others who are persuaded by these lectures to look at Greek art with a free and innocent eye will experience one of the great pleasures of life, liberation from an unconscious insincerity. And it is a pleasure to think that these lectures were delivered at Cambridge. The prestige of antique art in the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge is still unbounded. It has been conceded a place in the curriculum of humanist education; and from its close connection with literature it has a special appeal to English taste. In attacking Greek sculpture the Slade Professor was attacking the one branch of the visual arts which in the Universities had ever constituted a serious subject; and the picture of Fry—thin eager face, tall thin body, pointer in hand—persuading a University audience that Greek art is relatively poor stuff, cannot but remind us of the Knight of la Mancha: though in this case the Windmills really were giants, the indestructible giants of prejudice.

But when all is said, Fry was a greater critic when praising than when condemning, and it is difficult not to feel that the most interesting lectures of the series were still to come. In particular the confusing period between the decay of classical and rise of medieval art needs to be treated with his ever-present sense of aesthetic value. The whole problem of that period lies in a distinction between the two forms of departure from the classical tradition; the one due to provincial incompetence, the other to a new aesthetic intuition. In making that distinction the tests of sensibility and vitality would have had an historical

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as well as a critical value. Byzantine art, too, requires detached critical examination. After centuries of neglect it has become irradiated with fashionable approbation, and practically no attempt is made to discriminate between its rare masterpieces and the mass of effete and insignificant objects which have only a certain negative good taste to recommend them. Who but Fry had the equipment and the authority for such an undertaking? His views on the arts of the Renaissance and modern world had been expressed more often, and the lectures on those periods would necessarily have contained fewer revaluations. But how gladly we should have seen these familiar subjects take their place in the whole scheme; how eagerly we should have welcomed some heroes of the old world to redress the balance of the new. For as the lectures stand at present, the new worlds of aesthetic responsiveness, Negro, Maya, Chinese, have a disproportionate prominence over the arts of our Western European civilization which once seemed so complete and all-embracing. To see these lectures in true perspective we must re-read his appreciations of Giotto, Donatello, Giorgione, Rembrandt or Cézanne. In discussing these men his criticism grew in richness and subtlety, in proportion as the subject was more complex and closer to his own imaginative experience. His emotions before a bronze pot might be keen and sharp, but if the quality of his writing is any guide, they were less profound and lasting than his emotions before a Rembrandt. Such is the measure of our loss.



# I

## ART-HISTORY AS AN ACADEMIC STUDY

ALTHOUGH the University of Cambridge has shown such goodwill to a former pupil as to appoint me Professor of Fine Art under the Slade Foundation, I am anxious not to presume upon my position. Although I am a Professor, I am still somewhat of an outsider. For one thing I am a Professor without a Tripos, a fox without a tail. Now greatly as I appreciate the freedom which the absence of that appendage confers upon me, I am so far from wishing to persuade other Professors to have theirs amputated that I am tempted to put in a plea that one should be attached—not indeed to my own person—I am not likely to hold this post long enough to survive the operation—but to the person, or perhaps the office, of one of my successors.

It may be that the vision which I have conjured up in your minds of a Professor of Fine Art trailing after him a Tripos and all its impedimenta is far from enchanting you. Let me say at once how much I sympathize with your apprehensions—you probably imagine some undergraduate with a journalistic gift gaining first class honours because, without doing any solid work, he has picked up the latest fashionable gossip about Sur-realism and the Russian Ballet. You imagine questions the answers to which depend upon flattering the examiner's personal tastes.

It is possible that you may have had some such qualms before deciding to institute the English Literature Tripos—I am not sure that they have altogether subsided—but you probably feel that this is a far more perilous suggestion. Literature of one kind or another has always had an Academic status, but Art is a very different matter. Even more than English literature Art must appear to you to be a 'fancy' subject.

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Even if no one here holds the opinion once maintained by the great Lord Salisbury, when he opposed spending public money on the Victoria and Albert Museum, that Art is nothing but a trivial amusement for the idle rich, one cannot deny that the visual arts have long lain under a shadow of disapproval in this country. That shadow is growing less, has indeed visibly diminished since a Royal Commission discovered that our incompetence in the arts of design was seriously impairing our export trade. But still something is left of that nineteenth-century attitude which regarded any attempt to think or talk seriously about Art as ridiculous and provoked such uproarious hilarity in the Law Courts whenever a question of artistic value was a subject of litigation. Nevertheless, something remains of that suspicion of the study of the visual arts, and it explains perhaps the indifference of our Universities to that study.

For about 100 years German Universities have made courses in Art-history a regular part of their curricula, and yet here, although the study of the art of letters has always formed a large part of our University education, and although Music has long since had its status and its special degrees, no opportunities for the study of the visual arts have ever been offered by British Universities until last year, when the Courtauld Institute opened its doors.

We are so familiar with this state of things that we scarcely appreciate how odd it is. The mere fact that we have no convenient word by which to designate that body of studies which the Germans call *Kunstforschung*—a body of studies of which the actual history of Art is only a part—is significant. I am obliged to use the awkward and inadequate word 'Art-history' for it.

Now 'Art-history' is inextricably involved in a number of studies which are regarded as eminently worthy of Academic status. It has indeed from an Academic point of view many advantages over Music, if only because its records go back so much further. In the study of pre-history paintings and artefacts form our chief data. In this period and in the study of primitive peoples Art-history is inextricably interwoven

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with Anthropology. Its importance in the history of the early Empires is paramount, and in the history of religion through all periods it offers indispensable assistance. It has indeed actually gained a footing in the Classical Tripos from the importance of its contribution to the understanding of Greek Life. At many points it is in close touch with Psychology. Sometimes we suspect the psychologists of rather unwarranted intrusions, as when Dr Freud explained the whole nature of the artist in a small pamphlet some years ago, but in the main it is we Art-historians who are more anxious to ask questions of the psychologists than they are to give us the answers.

If ever there was a study which, needing as it does the co-operation of so many sciences, would benefit by sharing the life of the University, it is surely that of Art-history, and I would make bold to claim that the benefits it would confer would be at least equal to those it would receive. If ever there was a liberal education, that of Art-history with its immense range of interests, its vast accumulation of learning and the necessity it imposes for delicacy and refinement of perception might claim to be such. And as for its being a soft subject, I could set a paper that would plough whole regiments of undergraduates and, what is more, I could not pass in it myself.

Perhaps the reason why I hope so much that before long Cambridge may, like London, set up a faculty of Art-history in its midst is that we are still so terribly ignorant, that we have such a crying need for systematic study in which scientific methods will be followed wherever possible, where at all events the scientific attitude may be fostered and the sentimental attitude discouraged.

Wherever a purely historical question is at issue there is no excuse for anything but a disinterested search for truth. In that respect Art-history is exactly on a par with other histories. An enormous amount of work has been done, and perhaps still more remains to be done, in arranging works of art in exact sequence of time. It is here that the Germans have done so much pioneer work, and indeed the whole tendency of their art-historical studies has been to regard works of art



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almost entirely from a chronological point of view, as coefficients of a time sequence, without reference to their aesthetic significance. Now it is easy enough to maintain such an attitude in the earlier periods of human society—at this stage there are so few artefacts that we examine all with equal curiosity and merely note by the way that some show technical improvement as compared with others. And this we note mainly in order to mark stages in the evolution of a culture. We are rarely even tempted into acrimonious discussions of whether the work of one tribe or period is better than another.

Theoretically, of course, such an attitude might be persisted in throughout more recent history, only that when we come to later periods the number of artefacts is so great and the distinction between works made to satisfy aesthetic cravings and those designed for use becomes so obvious, that we inevitably direct our enquiries along the lines of our aesthetic reactions; we begin to think the aesthetic valuations of works of art part of the business of the Art-historian, perhaps somewhat in the same way that the political historian is induced to make judgments of moral value.

But in any case, when once this question of Beauty comes in, we find ourselves in a world of strong convictions based on no demonstrable reasons, of feelings vehement in proportion to their insecurity—a world where intensity of conviction, force of character and eloquence of expression sway opinion in default of more solid arguments. In short, we behave much more like the theologians of past time than like men of science of to-day. I do not say that we push things so far as they did. I have never had the faintest wish to burn alive or even to torture any one for denying that Cézanne was a great artist. Nor do we predict for our opponents such painful experiences in another life. None the less, like them, we all tend to believe that there is an orthodox standard of values—that Michelangelo really *is* greater than Meissonier and Raphael than Raffaelli in some objective sense. Only when we come to discuss this scale of values more closely, even with those whose general training and outlook is similar to our own, we discover serious dis-

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crepancies of opinion and in the end each of us goes his way saying to himself, 'I alone hold the orthodox faith' and, if he is honest, he adds, 'but since I am always revising and changing my opinions I know that at any given moment even my belief is not perfectly sound'. Thus we push sectarianism even further than the Scottish lady, who had doubts about the minister, because, if we are honest, we have doubts about our own aesthetic salvation whilst being certain that every one else is damned.

It may be imagined then with what envy from time to time we cast a sidelong glance at our scientific colleagues and note how calm reason presides at their assemblies and results of objective validity are constantly being brought forth.

Let us consider for a moment this much coveted objectivity which distinguishes the judgments of science, and see how it is established. We generally say that it is due to the fact that the man of science appeals to experience and that when experience confirms his statements we judge them to be true—they gain universal acceptance. But do not we also, who seek to establish aesthetic judgments, do not we also appeal to experience? If I make the statement that Cézanne was a great artist, I say to any one who disputes that—'Look at such and such a picture', and I appeal to my experience of that picture—I say 'If you will repeat my experiment, you will find that the colours are related together in a harmony of extraordinary richness; that the forms cohere together in a perfectly balanced system; that the texture shows a delicately sensitive apprehension on the artist's part and communicates that feeling to us'. But my adversary comes to me next day and says 'I did as you told me, I went to look at that picture with a free and unbiased mind and I now appeal to *my* experience, which is that the man who painted that was an incompetent bungler and botcher, whose forms are shapeless and incoherent, whose colour is heavy, leaden and dull; he communicated nothing to me but a sense of pity for his clumsy and pathetic efforts to exercise a function for which the gods had denied him the most ordinary aptitude'.

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Those of you who remember the observations which were made when Cézanne was first revealed to the British public, now more than twenty years ago, will recognize that this is no exaggeration of what took place in arguments even between highly trained and gifted spectators.

Why is it then that, when two men of science dispute about some question, the appeal to experience has such effect that even that violent partisanship to which man—and even scientific man—is prone, is instantly calmed and agreement is accepted, however reluctantly, whilst we poor searchers for aesthetic values go on disputing indefinitely? The reason is, of course, that in the last resort the searcher for scientific truth can appeal to a sensation so simple that all normal human beings react to it in the same way. When it comes down to the question of whether a pointer is opposite a particular mark on a scale or not, no two human beings will differ, unless one of them is suffering from such grave disturbances of his vision or his mental powers that he would long ago have been incapacitated for ordinary life.

Now certain scientific experiments depend upon the recognition of a particular colour appearing at a certain moment in the process and here we can establish the objective validity of our results only because colour-blindness affects a relatively small minority of people. We have only to imagine colour-blindness to be commoner than our normal vision—and let us suppose it to be of many varying kinds—for it to become nearly impossible to establish truths based on colour observation. Doubtless, in reality, we should circumvent this by various devices, and be able to fix on some particular kind of colour vision which gave us results most concordant with truths established by other means and agree to regard that as veridical. Now if a slight difference of reaction to so relatively simple an experience as the recognition of a particular colour would be so disturbing to our search for objective validity, what hope have we of that universal concordance of opinion when we consider anything so complex as a work of art? Take the question of colour alone: instead of the recognition of a single colour we have in a picture a great many colours combined in all sorts of compli-

cated ways and intended, not merely to be recognized as such and such colours, but as having quite special relations to each other.

It so happens that quite recently there was a dispute about colour which illustrates my point. Mr Herbert Read, speaking of Frith's 'Derby Day', described its colour as drab. An indignant letter of protest appeared in *The Listener* from someone who declared that the critic either had no eyes or had not used them, for Frith's 'Derby Day' was full of bright colours. Here the disputants were at cross purposes because they spoke of different things. Undoubtedly there are many patches of bright local colour in Frith's 'Derby Day', but as these are not bound together in any consistent scheme and as the artist has relapsed, wherever there was no excuse for bright local colour, into a vague neutrality, the total effect is certainly drab.

It seems then that we must abandon all hope of making aesthetic judgments of universal validity. If we are perfectly honest, we must accept an attitude of complete scepticism about even the most widely accepted judgments. If a person persists, in spite of all proofs to the contrary, that the earth is flat, we relegate him to the class of hopeless cranks or lunatics and disregard him entirely; but if a person declares Raphael to be a very inferior painter whose reputation is based on a misunderstanding, we may in fact disregard him, but we have no evident right to do so, since the history of taste will furnish instances of reversals of generally accepted judgments scarcely less striking than this would be.

Let me give an instance of this because it is a phenomenon that we shall do well always to keep in mind. After the Renaissance the supreme value of Classic Sculpture became a dogma universally accepted—from 1500 to 1800 it would probably have been impossible to find any dissentient voice, and throughout the nineteenth century relatively few heretical doubters could be found. This dogma was believed so wholeheartedly and so uncritically that almost anything that could claim to derive from Greece, even through Roman copies, inspired profound admiration. Under the compulsion of this dogma many cultured

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English noblemen made collections of Classical sculptures at great expense and enjoyed universal admiration for their enlightened taste—and yet when, in the later nineteenth century, the systematic study of Classical art was at last undertaken, it became quite evident that most of these admired masterpieces were second- and third-rate copies largely restored and reconstructed by eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century forgers. And many of these statues which had received the votive offerings of generations of *conoscenti* are now relegated to remote corridors or fulfil a more humble and appropriate service as little noticed garden ornaments.

This is a sufficiently striking case of reversal of an aesthetic dogma, but I myself have lived long enough to see what we may call the ‘focus of appreciation’ shift from one period of an art to another. When I was young all Greek art of the fifth century B.C. was sacred. One did not ask, ‘Is that a beautiful statue?’ one asked, ‘Is it of the fifth century?’ and the answer to that question sanctioned or forbade one’s enthusiasm. Fourth-century work, however attractive, was to be austere shunned as being decadent. On the other hand, our appreciation was allowed to stray backwards to the later archaic work—it was still not quite ‘the thing’ but it was admirable in its own honest, if slightly incompetent, way. This process went on until, little by little, the enthusiasm for the archaic period became more vocal and more sincere than that felt for the once supreme century.

The story of the Italian Primitives is equally instructive. Almost neglected from 1500 to, say, 1850, by the time I was a young man they had become of a supreme holiness—not to admire Botticelli was to own oneself an outcast, and even the products of the purely commercial picture factories of the day shared in the diffused sanctity of the period. Although, as a critic, I make a constant effort to test aesthetic values by direct experience, I am certain that I did not escape the contagion of that enthusiasm and that it biased my judgment and closed my eyes to much that I might have admired. And whilst the Primitives were all holy, the artists of the Seicento, which had ruled supreme throughout

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the eighteenth century, were almost taboo. Morelli, who was the great prophet of the day, allowed, it is true, a passing glance of recognition at Scarsellino who showed reminiscences of earlier art, but no one dared to recognize how good a painter Guido Reni was.

And now, I notice, that the younger critics are becoming more and more difficult about the Primitives; are ready to see that even in that period the mass of merely imitative and second-rate work outweighs the good, and at the same time the Seicento has become once more the object of serious study and even a second-rate artist like Magnasco has a society devoted to his cult.

Such changes of valuation occurring within so relatively short a space of time must warn us that not even the most established reputations can be held exempt from the changes and chances of mortal life. What is strange is that, with such palpable evidence of mutability before our eyes, we should cling so desperately to the feeling that our aesthetic judgments have some objective value, that, however mistaken they may be, they are approximations to some absolute scale of values.

But let us consider what results would follow if, by some device or other, we were able to establish such an absolute scale. Suppose that we could demonstrate, by reasoning as cogent as that which forbids us to believe that the earth is flat, that, let us say, Rembrandt was the greatest artist that ever lived and, by the same method, could establish an exact scale for valuing any particular work of art, we should in fact find ourselves in a very deplorable condition. For the *knowledge* that a work of art has a high aesthetic value is absolutely useless to us—what matters is the intensity and significance of its effect upon us. No doubt after we had experienced intense aesthetic pleasure from a work it might be a satisfaction of our self-esteem to know that its absolute aesthetic value was 75 out of a possible 100 marks. We might enjoy *ourselves* more, but it would not increase by a tittle our enjoyment of the work itself. And then, supposing that before visiting a foreign gallery we were to look at our Baedeker and note that a certain picture was marked 88, and then were to find that it left us absolutely cold—what a shock to our

pride, and, if we were with companions, with what haste we should improvise a few glowing epithets wherewith to conceal the emotional deadness within. Goodness knows there is enough aesthetic hypocrisy as it is—even the flimsy dogmas and snobberies of the day are powerful enough to compel many insincere expressions of aesthetic fervour; but if they were no dogmas but demonstrable truths, there would be more hard swearing in a picture gallery than in all the law courts. And for those more sincere and sensitive minds who could not bring themselves to bluff it out, what despair might ensue from the ineluctable evidence of their aesthetic inaptitude. How many in despair would throw themselves from the terrace of the National Gallery to perish in the traffic of Trafalgar Square.

Whereas, as things are, I know several people who can see nothing in Raphael who nevertheless lead happy and contented lives and are not ashamed to give me the benefit of their opinion on any work of art that may come to their notice. Let us then be grateful that, however earnestly we may strive to establish true aesthetic values, their truth or falsity can never be established beyond cavil; that matters of taste—so far from being unfit subjects for disputation as the Romans, with their incurable obtusity, maintained—so far from being *non disputanda* are precisely *the* questions on which humanity may dispute and argue, more or less profitably, till the end of time.

In fact, when we ask for objective validity in aesthetic judgments, we are somewhat like the Frogs in the fable. We have an excellent King Log who lies there quite imposingly in our pond and each of us is convinced that *if* the King ever spoke it would be to establish the truth of his own judgments. If, however, Jupiter were ever to answer our prayers for King Stork we should find ourselves, as I have shown, in a very different posture.

Now when we come to compare our attitude towards scientific truth on the one hand and the truth of aesthetic judgments on the other we note one fundamental difference of supreme importance. Nature levies a very heavy tax on those who fail to acquire exact scientific truth

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of her processes. Ignorance of bacterial infection has been punished throughout the ages by constantly recurring plagues and innumerable people still die prematurely because of our ignorance of many natural processes.

Our innate curiosity and desire for truth are thus powerfully reinforced by Nature's sanction. But erroneous judgments in art do not bring on epidemics. Science concerns the relations of man to his environment. Art is purely a family matter among human beings.

At this point I must ask you to let me give you a rough outline of what I conceive to be the function and *modus operandi* of works of art. What used to be called fine art (as distinct from applied art), of whatever kind it may be, whether poetry, music, or painting, is, I believe, the only means by which human beings can communicate to each other the quality and quiddity of their experiences. And in this lies its great contrast to science. For science enquires only what an experience is. For science the experience is summed up in a statement of fact. We ask the scientific observer 'Did the solution turn red or blue at this point?' That is all we want to know—we are not interested in the feeling tone which the sensation of blue gave him.

When one day about two hundred years ago Monsieur Chardin went into the kitchen of a certain house in Paris, he saw a saucepan lying on the kitchen table. That is a fact which is recorded in a particular picture and it is one which science might conceivably find useful, but when we look at the picture we pay no attention to that fact: what we care about is the exact and unique quality of Chardin's experience, what state of mind the sight of the saucepan on the table put him into, how it affected him, what it was in the situation that made him take immense trouble to tell us about it. And those persons who have the power to apprehend what Chardin expressed find it to be an experience of very great significance, one that far transcends anything usually conveyed to us by actual saucepans, one that takes us into the remoter regions of the imaginative world. We have to take note of the fact that for two centuries that experience of Monsieur Chardin's has seemed to a



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considerable number of people in each successive generation to be one of extraordinary importance.

The artist is then a man who has experiences of one kind or another which excite him in such a way that first of all for his own satisfaction he wishes to hold them in the focus of attention until he has exactly appreciated their quality, and this holding in focus results in the work of art, poem, picture or what not. Most men live through one experience after another without, as it were, stopping the current of life to enquire further about them—with the artist certain experiences have the power to arrest his attention so much that he turns aside from the current of life and waits until he has fixed that experience fully in his consciousness and extracted its full savour.

Nor is it necessarily the most poignant and exciting experiences which bring about this contemplative apprehension—often experiences quite trivial in themselves, like *Monsieur Chardin's*, may have the power thus to arrest and stimulate an artist. The poet is distinguished by the width and range of experiences provocative of such contemplation. With the artist it is almost always primarily a visual experience, although it is possible that an experience of a non-visual kind may be projected outwards in visible forms.

But whatever the stimulating circumstance may be, we must notice this, that the experience is composed of two elements: one the situation, the external stimulus, which in the case of art we may generally identify with the subject of the picture, and the other the whole nature of the artist which causes his reaction to that stimulus to be just what it is. Now this second element, brought by the artist, inevitably colours deeply the resulting experience—so that no two artists subjected to the same outward stimulus can possibly produce identical works of art.

Now, as we might expect, these two elements in the work of art—the external situation and the artist's reaction—vary immensely in proportion. Some artists bring to every experience so marked—it may be so distorted or it may be so profound—a nature that every experience they record is as it were lost in that. Thus whatever *El Greco* paints we are

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forced to think much more of El Greco than of the subject. Before a portrait of a great historical figure by a competent minor artist we may find ourselves discussing in detail the character of the man as revealed by his features—before a portrait by Rembrandt I have never found it possible to discuss any other personality than that of Rembrandt himself. If before a landscape you say ‘what a lovely picture!’ the artist, if he hears you, will be flattered—if however you say ‘what a lovely place’, he will probably resent it as a damning criticism of his work, although in point of fact he set out to tell us what a lovely place it was.

We see then that in proportion as what the artist brings to the experience is weighty and significant or—it may be—merely odd and peculiar, what we call the subject of the picture fades into insignificance.

This rule may seem too absolute, and I think we must except from it those artists whom we call illustrators—these, as I may perhaps show at greater length in the course of my lectures—these really belong to the class of literary artists using images instead of those condensed hieroglyphics which we call words. But with those artists the stimulating experience is not primarily visual.

I said at the beginning of this enquiry that the two elements in the work of art were the external situation, whatever it might be, and the reaction to it of the artist’s whole nature. Those words ‘the whole nature’ are almost certainly an over-statement, but what I wanted at once to underline was the fact, which becomes more and more clear to modern enquirers, that what the artist brings to the particular experience is much more than his immediate consciousness of it. His reaction is coloured by all sorts of subconscious associations and feelings, of which he is naturally unaware, but which affect profoundly the form taken by the work of art and which have the power to stir up corresponding subconscious feelings in the spectator. It is this fact that the work of art acts as a transmitting medium between the artist’s subconscious nature and our own that gives it its peculiar, and as we say ‘magic’, power over us. It is magic because the effect on our feelings often far transcends what we can explain by our conscious experience.

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It is this effect on us of the work of art which Professor Housman, as he told us in his inaugural lecture, finds so conveniently recorded for himself in the bristling of his beard, though its importance I suspect lies far more in the profound psychical disturbances which accompany such physiological changes than in those changes themselves.

I have boldly used this word 'subconscious' although it bristles with difficulties. What a pace the world has moved since Myers, when I was an undergraduate, first launched the words 'subliminal consciousness'! In particular the Psycho-analysts, with whom I suspect aesthetic enquirers will have increasingly to deal—the Psycho-analysts have given us a very strange and disquieting picture of the contents of this long-unnoticed companion of our conscious life. Now they are mainly concerned with mapping out the most primitive and fundamental part of this entity, with those emotional patterns which are laid down in the first years of infancy. These may possibly one day be shown to have a bearing upon the nature of artistic creation, but we are more particularly concerned with another aspect, with those parts of the subconscious being which have filtered down through our conscious life and consist of the abiding residue of innumerable sensations, feelings, predilections, aspirations, desires, judgments, in fact all those things which constitute our spiritual life.

The mere length of time that an artist has lived has then inevitably an influence on the work of art. When we look at the late works of Titian or Rembrandt we cannot help feeling the pressure of a massive and rich experience which leaks out, as it were, through the ostensible image presented to us, whatever it may be. There are artists, and perhaps Titian and Rembrandt are good examples, who seem to require a very long period of activity before this unconscious element finds its way completely through into the work of art. In other cases, particularly in artists whose gift lies in a lyrical direction, the exaltation and passion of youth transmits itself directly into everything they touch, and then sometimes, when this flame dies down, their work becomes relatively cold and uninspired.

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I fear that a great deal of this must appear to you to be rather wildly speculative and hazardous. It would take many lectures to bring before you the kind of observations which make me put it forward as the most plausible hypothesis that I can propose, but I hope you will grant me at least the notion of the work of art as the central term—the *liaison* in a transaction which takes place between the artist and the spectator. That transaction is liable to all sorts of accidents which render it more or less imperfect, but the ideal transaction would be one in which the artist embodied his 'experience' completely in the work of art and met with a spectator capable of perfect response to that experience.

If we take an analogy from the wireless—the artist is the transmitter, the work of art the medium and the spectator the receiver. Now for the message to come through, the receiver must be more or less in tune with the transmitter. And herein lies the difficulty, for the message of a work of art is generally immensely complex, summarizing as I believe a whole mass of experiences hidden in the artist's subconsciousness. And this complexity renders it probable that each receiver only picks up a part of the total message. Therein lies the difficulty, and, considering the immense variety of receiving instruments that men possess, it is not surprising that they do not always agree about the messages received: rather we may be surprised at the degree of concordance among at least certain groups of people.

This simile taken from the wireless may throw some further light on the questions which exercise us. When we look round upon the world and consider the kind of works of visual, dramatic and literary art which have the greatest vogue, we cannot help thinking that a great many people possess only very imperfect receiving instruments, instruments that can only respond to extremely violent emissions of a crude and elementary kind. Nor is this to be wondered at when we reflect that a great part of a humanistic education consists in learning to attune our sensibilities by continual 'listening in', as it were, to the great writers of the past.

And there are those who think that the absence of any similar exercise

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in attuning the sensibility in the purely scientific studies prevents them, when followed exclusively, from giving a completely liberal education. But strangely enough it has never been thought to be an essential part of a University education to effect any development or refinement of our sensibility to visual forms and colours. Indeed anyone who is familiar with many of the rooms of both graduate and undergraduate members of the University will have frequently noticed either a total indifference to visual harmony or a feeling that I will not call barbaric, because many so-called barbarians show a strong native sensibility to visual beauty, but an attitude to visual harmony so elementary, so puerile and so ill-organized as to make us wonder how they can have profited so little from living in a place where so many buildings are distinguished for the harmony of their proportions. It should I think be regarded as rather shameful that anyone should go through a University education without gaining some insight into that rich world of spiritual experience which is stored up in the great works of art of the past.

Now it will not have escaped you that, in all that I have said just now about the need for perfecting our receptivity to the messages transmitted through works of art, I have been tacitly assuming a scale of values: I have spoken of great masters, of great works of art, I have compared well-attuned and defective receiving apparatuses, whereas in a previous part of my discourse I seem to have been at pains to show that we had no right to employ any such terms.

Let me try to exculpate myself from the charge of inconsistency. In trying to show, first that the search for an objective standard of aesthetic values is hopeless and secondly that, could we attain it, the mere *knowledge* of that standard would be entirely useless to us, I have been trying to bring about something like a shift of perspective in our attitude to aesthetic values. If we regard works of art not as isolated static phenomena but as potentialities for evoking in ourselves certain states of mind, we shall concentrate our attention rather on what we can get from them than on what we conceive them to be in themselves.

And when we do this we shall have a perfect right to compare the

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state of mind which results from contemplating one work of art with that which results from contemplating another. We may distinguish between them, we may say: 'This picture rewards me for a prolonged and exhaustive contemplation. As I keep my attention fixed on it, it continues to unfold within me richer and more complex states of mind, whereas with this other picture, after the first shock of recognition is passed, no further developments take place.' We shall feel before some works of art that they set up vibrations in the deeper layers of our consciousness and that these vibrations radiate in many directions, lighting up a vast system of correlated feelings and ideas. Whereas others touch, it may be very poignantly, only a narrow range of feeling and carry us no further.

We have every right to make such comparisons and to question others about their experiences in this respect: and thus perhaps we may build up a rough working hypothesis of an order of relative values. Although even then we shall gain far more by noting the specific qualities of different experiences and distinguishing them clearly from one another than we can gain by placing them in order of merit. But above all we must regard this as a mere working hypothesis always open to alteration and correction.

It is indeed only by acquiring a certain humility and diffidence in our judgments that we can hope constantly to improve our sensibility and lay ourselves open to fresh experiences. Two dangers are equally menacing. On the one hand the self-sufficiency of the man who says 'I know what I like' and, 'one man's opinion is as good as another's'. On the other hand the slavish obedience to the dictates of fashion in taste. Snobbism, as we now conveniently call it.

And I cannot doubt the importance of perfecting our sensibility in this respect, since art is one of the essential modes of our spiritual life. There are innumerable shades of feeling, overtones of our normal life of which we should never become aware if the artist did not bring them to our consciousness. And the possession of such a sensitive apprehension is one of the marks of a man of culture, a necessary complement to the possession of a well-stored and logical mind.

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I have spoken of the extreme complexity of the message embodied in a work of art. I should like to bring that clearly to your minds by a particular case. As I cannot show you a lantern slide in this building I have chosen a picture which I am certain everyone here knows almost by heart, Botticelli's 'Birth of Venus'. You know how the willowy, undulating, nude figure of the Goddess appears, standing on the edge of a gigantic cockle-shell which floats on the waters of a bay. A Zephyr, personified by two winged figures, floating in the air blows her towards the shore, as we see by the wavelets stirred by the shell's prow. On the shore a young woman moves, with a dancing motion, towards the Goddess, holding ready to receive her a richly ornamented mantle. It is dawn, but already so clear that Venus's own star is only just visible in the sky. Behind the attendant maiden is a grove of trees with large delicately shaped leaves and through the air there falls a shower of pale roses.

I have given this description just to recall the picture to your minds, but you see that these words, which are merely a summary of the subject of the picture, show at once how evocative that is by itself. How all these images are charged with emotional power! To begin with, the nude figure, however idealized and etherealized it may be, as it is here, must carry some vague overtones of sexual feeling. It is probable that here these would never become present to the consciousness but they would add a certain poignancy and urgency to other feelings. None the less, these elements are sufficiently marked to have frightened away at once many spectators of past generations. These would have been instantly side-tracked from further response to the artist's message. Then the idea of Venus carries with it a whole mass of suggestions which will vary with the degree of the spectator's knowledge of Classical poetry. And at this point again I can imagine the case of a spectator whose receiving apparatus will jamb. If he has formed very precise images from Greek poetry and sculpture of how Venus appeared to the Greek imagination, he may perhaps be so shocked by the distortion which her image has undergone in Botticelli's very differently organized spirit that he will

take henceforth a violently unreceptive attitude. But supposing him not to be so narrowly Hellenophil, he may on the other hand get a very strong added feeling from the peculiar emotional tone with which Renaissance artists like Botticelli welcomed this rebirth of Classical mythology—from the peculiar intensity with which its poetical imagery was apprehended at that moment. This does not nearly exhaust the appeals which such a picture makes—there is the conjunction of nude figures with radiant skies and calm waters which evoke memories of delightful physical sensations accompanied by vivid emotional states—there are the figures floating in the air which stir vague desires for freedom from our earthbound movements. And all this is concerned merely with the subject, the pretext of Botticelli's design. All this was more or less the common property of Botticelli's period; any one of a dozen artists might have conceived something similar—indeed it is probable that almost everything in the subject was suggested to Botticelli by the poet Politian. But when we pass from the imagery to the mode in which it is presented, to that which gives it its unique specific quality, we are getting into closer contact with Botticelli's spirit. The subject was present to Botticelli's consciousness, but the actual forms and colours reveal to us profounder aspects of his nature, those stored-up unconscious elements which forced him to give to the imagery its particular essence. And at this point we begin to yield ourselves to the rhythmical movements of Botticelli's linear design, to its mazy interweft of curves leading us on with a charmed motion from one to another with echoes arising from all the different parts of the design. We get a quite special emotion too from the recognition of the inevitable relation of one part with another, of one note of colour with another. And these recognitions arouse in us states of mind far too deep in our being, too vague, too massive to be in any way analysed or described by words.

Now I suspect that almost any educated person is likely to respond to those appeals which the imagery of this picture makes, but the extent to which they will vibrate in unison with those deeper, vaguer, more indescribable emotions which are evoked by the actual texture and



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substance of the picture will vary immensely: it will depend on how far they have mastered the specific idiom of pictorial design, to what extent they are able to grasp the complex interrelations of all the parts in the total unity and thereby to get the special thrill which comes to us when we recognize their perfect coherence. It is towards the heightening of his sensibility in these respects that the student of art must always strive, since it is through that alone that he can receive the most essential part of the artist's message.

But my main purpose has been to make clear to you how complicated a matter a work of art may be and to indicate at how many points two spectators may diverge in their reactions, each starting off, it may be, upon some side track down which their personal make-up or their past experiences may tempt them; how impossible it is to hope for any objectivity in their judgments of a work of art taken as a whole.

It is the recognition of all these difficulties, tending as they do to make the discussion of works of art futile exercises in rhetorical disputation, which has led me to devise the method which I intend to employ in the succeeding lectures of my course. The important thing is to make sure that we are talking about the same thing and to this end I propose to narrow down our enquiry by isolating particular qualities in various works of art and comparing them with one another solely in regard to one or two qualities at a time.

In this way it may be possible to lay a trap for our preconceptions and prejudices or rather to short-circuit them. We may check thus the too immediate response of 'I like this' and 'I dislike that' or even 'I prefer this to that'. If we can merely ask of ourselves the question, 'Does this work give evidence of the special quality we are considering?' or ask of two works of art which evinces this quality more, it is possible that we may get something like a consensus of opinion, something at least much more approaching to objective judgments than is common in artistic discussions.

Now do not think I am naïve enough to suppose that I can in this way, by taking one quality or aspect of a work of art after another and

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then by adding up our judgments on each, arrive at an objective valuation of the work as a whole, because, first of all, who is to decide what sum of qualities makes up the work of art—still more, who is to decide what relative value is to be attached to one quality rather than another?

Some such method of calculating the status of artists was once employed, I forget by what eighteenth-century writer on aesthetics, perhaps de Piles. Anyhow there were to be marks given to all the leading artists, so many for composition, so many for execution, for drawing, for colour, for chiaroscuro, for handling, etc., and when the marks were added up there came out at the top of the list, above Raphael, Michelangelo, Leonardo, Rubens and all the others, no less an artist than Albano. I fear this does not mean very much to you. Few of you perhaps have had the curiosity to stop in a picture gallery and consider one of Albano's sugary confections, where a number of terribly pink and smiling naked infants disport themselves coyly in excessively ambrosial glades, and all painted with that peculiar sharp bright finish which reminds one of the Victorian tea-tray. But if you had examined them you would not have much confidence in de Piles's method of marking.

No, I cherish no such vain hopes—the value of my method is to stop that immediate like or dislike response to the work of art as a whole which as we have seen is just as likely to be due to imperfections in our receiving set as to anything in the work of art itself. It is possible, I think, by some such methods to circumvent our native prejudices and predilections and to acquire a more alert passivity in our attitude. And it is by cultivating such an attitude that we can best, I think, increase the delicacy and sensibility of our reception of the messages of the present artists. It is the fulness, richness and significance of our feelings in face of works of art that matters—the judgments we draw from them are only of value in so far as they may indicate to others the possibilities of experiencing similar emotions. Whatever we do we shall not attain a standard of objective validity. It is better that we should remain the loyal subjects of his Silent Serenity, King Log.

## II

# SENSIBILITY

IN my first lecture I endeavoured to show that one of the great difficulties which we have in discussing works of art is that those who discuss are so rarely looking at the same thing. A work of art is so complex, it appeals to so many different associations and so many vague subconscious elements of our being, that unless we adopt some special technique we can hardly hope to understand one another.

The method I suggested and which I want to pursue in this course is to confine our attention to one or two qualities of a work of art at a time and to compare a number of different works to see to what extent each work possesses or lacks that quality.

One of these general notions that I want to discuss in this way, is the notion of sensibility. I want to take note of the presence or absence of the quality we call sensibility in the works of different periods and countries and see whether we can detect any relations between this and other phenomena. And first, what do we mean by sensibility, and what significance has it for us? The simplest case we can take is the comparison between a straight line made with a ruler and one drawn by hand. The ruled line is completely mechanical and as we say insensitive. Any line drawn by hand must exhibit some characteristics peculiar to the nervous mechanism which executed it. It is the graph of a gesture carried out by a human hand and directed by a brain, and this graph might theoretically reveal to us first, something about the artist's nervous control, and secondly, something of his habitual nervous condition, and finally, something about his state of mind at the moment the gesture was made. The ruled line expresses nothing but the mathematical idea of the shortest distance between two points and this it does almost per-

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fectly. The drawn line may also be intended to express that idea, as for instance when it is drawn as a diagram in a geometrical proposition, but though it may express this well enough for our purposes it does not express it perfectly. When we are thinking about geometry we simply disregard its aberrations from the ruled line, but when we look at it in and for itself as a visual object of consideration these aberrations become of the utmost importance. If such a drawn line were examined by a doctor he might detect evidences of nervous disease or poisoning in the author. But if we look at it as we look at a work of art it will tell us something of what we call the artist's sensibility.

I have had the curiosity to make this slide just as an experiment to see what effect, if any, is made on us by straight lines drawn by hand as compared with ruled lines. Here is a picture by Paul Klee and here is the same figure with the lines ruled (1). Take first the ruled copy. It doesn't matter who ruled the lines—as a matter of fact I did, and rather carelessly—but you can overlook that. Whatever sensibility remains is still Paul Klee's, and of course the design alone manages to express a good deal of his personality. There is his idea of making a figure vaguely symbolic of a human being by this particular arrangement of straight lines, and the wit of abbreviating a figure with parcels into such a form. The proportions of the volumes which the lines are meant to suggest is due to his specific feeling for significant proportions; and the exact position of the figure in the rectangle of the picture is again expressive of his personal choice. But there the story ends.

When we turn to the picture executed by him it tells us a good deal more. We know that these lines might have been drawn even by the same artist in various ways expressive of different moods. The lines might have been made by vigorous rapid strokes with more or less accent here and there, or they might have been drawn with meticulous care and have approximated more to mechanical exactitude. And if the same figure had been repeated by different artists each one would have declared a different habitual pattern of nervous forces and a variety of that habitual pattern due to the mood in which he drew them. So at

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once this leads us to distinguish between two aspects of the artist's feeling which are here clearly represented by the two images before you. One is the feeling expressed by the artist in his design, in the planning and proportion of the parts to the whole; and the other is the feeling expressed by the artist in executing that design. This distinction has, I think, great importance; or at least it is very necessary to bear it in mind when we talk about sensibility.

We may call one the artist's feeling for organization, the faculty that directs the general relations of a design, the correspondences and contrasts of different parts. And we may call the other his sense of the texture of his design. Now artists as a rule when talking of the texture of a work of art use the word sensibility. They speak of the artist's sensibility as revealed by the specific quality of his lines, by the relations of his tone and colour and by the handling of his paint. Here the word is closely akin to sensitivity. We speak of an instrument being sensitive when it responds to a very small change of conditions—a balance is sensitive when a very small weight will turn the scale, a thermometer is sensitive when it registers a very small change of temperature, and so on. And so we might say that an artist's line is sensitive when it registers very subtle changes of form, when it has great power of variation.

But the idea of sensibility implies more than this mere sensitivity to change. It implies that although, let us say, a contour shows subtle variations throughout its length it also has a constant or consistent quality, its variations are not random or fortuitous, they have some constant principle which underlies the variations. It is rhythmical—there will be continual recurrences of similar though not identical sequences. It may make this clearer if we take the analogy of poetry. Here the verse form, whatever it is, supplies a rhythmical constant, so many syllables or so many stresses in every line. But a writer who exemplifies the law equally clearly in every line without any variation whatever becomes intolerable, and we say he lacks sensitivity. The poet is one who feels the rhythm so clearly that he need not think about it; he can allow himself to vary it continually without ever losing hold of

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the rhythmic law. This principle is, I think, a fundamental one in all art; we shall always find the tendency at once to recognize a law or fixed principle and at the same time never to let the work of art become a mere enunciation of the law. It will perpetually approximate to a law and perpetually vary from it. I shall try to show later on why this should be.

We note, then, this distinction between the artist's feeling for the general planning of the design, and his feeling for the exact quality as expressed when he carries out the plan. And we are going to use the word sensibility for a certain quality in the execution. Some time we shall have to enquire whether there is any fundamental difference of feeling between the two, whether we may not also have to talk of the artist's sensibility as shown in the general organization. But for the present we will treat them as two separate faculties of the artist. The case of music is highly instructive in this respect, for here the composer of a symphony cannot possibly execute it himself. What he writes down is a perfectly fixed conventional symbol of his design. Presumably, whilst he was composing, he called up to his inner ear actual sounds, the quality of which was due to his own auditory sensibility, but we can never hear that—we can never hear the symphony which the composer heard when he wrote it down. All we can hear is the design given through the sensibility of a conductor and the sum of the sensibilities of his orchestra. Hence the immense importance in music of the rôles of conductors and executants. We have to rely on them to get an idea of what the composer meant.

Somewhat similar is the case of architecture, where again the general design may be almost all which the architect can give. Sometimes, as in the case of a ferro-concrete building, the actual texture is purely mechanical and shows no sensibility at all. Whereas in the case of most medieval buildings the architect hands over his idea to a body of masons and sculptors whose sensibilities he employs to express his own conception almost in the same way as the musical composer uses an orchestra.

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We seem, then, to have got some sort of solid ground for making the distinction between the feeling expressed in the design and that expressed in the execution. We must always remember that, theoretically at least, the design is conceived in terms of its appropriate texture and that in a perfect work of art the texture is always supporting and carrying out the design. But, as I say, we have enough grounds for making the distinction; and, in the art of painting, we have an easy proof of the possible separation of the two in the case of a copy. The copy may well have exactly the design of the original. All that pertains to invention and planning will be identical in the two. Only in the original the execution will show the sensibility in texture of the creator, whereas in the copy another man's sensibility will have been substituted for it. We assume in general, perhaps too rashly, that this will inflict serious loss in the realization of the idea, but we ought to admit the possibility of a copy being actually a better work of art than the original. This would certainly occur if the sensibility for texture of the copyist happened to be more fitted to express the design than that of the creator. I can, I think, even point to such cases.

It is curious to note that the copy of a picture corresponds almost exactly to the performance of a symphony. It is rather surprising to reflect that in music we are almost always dealing with copies. The fact that this rather shocks us shows how great a stress we lay in painting on the artist's sensibility of texture.

Let us try to get a little clearer on this question by taking a case rather more complicated than that of the ruled and drawn straight line, but still a very simple one. We will consider the printed page versus the written page (2).

In print we have the expression of the sensibility of the designer of the type in his choice of the proportions of each letter, and his sensibility to their possible combinations. Then we have the sensibility of the printer shown in the spacing of the words and lines. Our aesthetic pleasure therefore comes from what we may call by analogy the architectural feeling of the type-cutter and printer. In the formal

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script you get, or may get, according to the power of the scribe, this architectural quality in a higher degree, because here the shapes of the letters, whilst conforming to a type, can be altered slightly so as to compose with one another in all sorts of different combinations. There may also be a greater play and variety in the spacing. Finally, in the free script we get the possibility of such variety that the result may be, and often is, unpleasantly chaotic—we feel the lack of any constant principle; we get the record of a nervous mechanism which is liable to accidental and capricious variation. On the other hand, we may get the richest, most varied and complex rhythmic relations possible. Since the actual shape of any letter is never repeated but only governed by a general tendency to conformity to type, the writer can build up much longer, more continuous rhythmic phrases than is possible in a formal script. Let us note in passing that from these comparisons we have discovered that we get the maximum pleasure from printed or written words somewhere between perfectly rigid form and anarchic variation.

Now the main difference between the formal and free script lies in the fact that in one, the formal, we are conscious of each letter in succession, our minds give the order to the hand to make now an *a*, now an *r*, now a *g*, and so forth, whereas in the free script the only orders consciously given are to make now an *and*, now a *the*, and now even a *hippopotamus*. Not only the spelling of the word but the formation of the letters is handed over to the unconscious and is run off by the conditioned reflexes of our hand. You can tell that this is so by the number of absurd mistakes in spelling which one is liable to make in doing a formal script. For our unconscious mind spells far more accurately than our conscious, except in the case of some very unfamiliar word which in fact is not handed over to the unconscious at all.

We note then that the utmost freedom and variety of rhythm, together with the power of holding it through long and complicated phrases, is peculiarly the property of our unconscious nerve-control. Indeed we may almost declare that all fully rhythmic movement must be carried out more or less unconsciously; whereas the feeling which is expressed



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in the general design is not so fully divorced from consciousness. Of course, even here, the synthetic power must arise from the unconscious; only it does so under pressure of a deliberate and conscious attention and is continually being subjected to conscious criticism, whereas the sensibility expressed in the intimate rhythms of texture must come from the unconscious alone.

Having thus established some notion of these two kinds of feeling, we may enquire what the attitude of creators and apprehenders of works of art at different times and places has been towards them, in order to see if any co-ordinations can be made between these and other phenomena. I am going to suggest first of all a number of rather vague notions about this question which have occurred to me, and to try to test them by examples; and for convenience I am going to use the word 'sensibility' for the sensibility to texture, the sensibility of execution, which we found to be most bound up with the unconscious nature.

We can establish provisionally a series of plausible equations. We may say, for example, that design, planning, co-ordination of the parts in the whole corresponds more or less with our desire to find order in things, our sense of immutable law and causation. Sensibility, on the other hand, corresponds to our desire for variety, multiplicity, chance, the unforeseeable. We may say that the conscious mind tends to a mechanistic view of things, a view amenable to mathematical statement: the unconscious brings in the vital element which eludes mathematical statement. The intellect finds its satisfaction in mathematical uniformity—it can even be replaced by a machine as in calculating and logical machines; it finds in the inorganic world of the crystal a perfect mathematical arrangement. The order it seeks for, and partially establishes, is one of absolute uniformity—all circles are identical statements of a proposition—all ellipses which correspond to a given formula are identical. But the distinguishing characteristic of living things is precisely that each one is unique—all the leaves of a tree conform to a recognizable type but no two leaves of a tree are identical in shape.

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Now in works of art we find, I suspect, something like a compromise between the mathematical order in which the intellect finds satisfaction and the conformity to type, but with the infinite variation which distinguishes organic life. In art there is at once order and uniqueness, which means incessant variation from the precise or mathematical order. And this precisely is the cause of what I shall boldly call the intellectual pleasure in art. I say 'boldly', because the existence of intellectual pleasure in art has been so often and so plausibly denied and I myself have often rejected it. Only lately I think I have seen wherein it consists and why we may call this particular kind of pleasure or satisfaction intellectual.

What we call the intellect finds satisfaction most definitely in the recognition of a causal sequence. When we ask *why*—let us say, why does the moon change its shape?—we are in a state of unrest or perplexity. When an astronomer explains to us the causes of this, that unrest disappears, the mind is at rest on the question, and I think we all agree that the moment at which we grasp clearly for the first time any such causal sequence we have a definitely pleasurable emotion. I can remember when I first understood the implications of the statement that 2 and 2 make 4 I had such a shock of pleasure. But, and this is an important point, it is a pleasure I cannot repeat because my mind has been in a state of rest ever since about the proposition  $2 + 2 = 4$ .

Now in contemplating a work of art, we are continually asking *why* and, if the artist is one with whom we can communicate, we are continually getting answers, and this repeated recognition of the causes of the picture being as it is gives us a succession of moments of pleasure as the mind passes from unrest to rest and satisfaction. Herein lies one of the causes of the richness of art as a source of pleasure. We cannot repeat the pleasure due to a causal explanation of a fact or a mathematical problem because we cannot repeat the passage from mental unrest to rest. As regards that particular question our mind is permanently at rest. But works of art prolong this process almost indefinitely.

The reason is that in works of art the answers to our questions are not

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given in terms of ordinary logic, but in terms of what we may call a logic of the senses. The artist's answers are appeals to our sense of fitness or harmony. There are, of course, people almost entirely lacking in this sense. Thus in music the musician's answers depend on our recognition of harmonious and inharmonious relations of the notes. Some people are, as we say, music deaf, that is to say this feeling is so rudimentary and so under-developed in them that they cannot accept the musician's answers as valid. And it is exactly the same in regard to harmonious proportions of form and colour, only that people are much less often forced to realize that they are form-blind, imagining as they do that recognition of likeness is all that the artist expects of them. But supposing this feeling, let us say for musical harmony, to exist and, in listening to music, we hear a discord. There is a moment of anxiety or uneasiness—we wonder why; then next moment, when the discord is resolved, we get the musician's answer.

In music and poetry these alternating moments of wondering enquiry and surprised satisfaction succeed one another in time. In the visual arts there is no fixed sequence, but the questions and answers succeed one another as our attention passes from one part to another. In the case of a symmetrical design we scarcely have time to ask the question why, because the answer is so obvious, the relation so elementary and self-evident. In itself then it can give us very little pleasure. Unrest never arises and therefore there is no shock of surprised recognition. Evidently then painters avoid anything like absolute symmetry unless for some special reason—it is too uninteresting. But balance about a centre line is capable of provoking a number of questions and affording a number of answers, and in a great work of art we get a conviction that we could go on with our endless sequence of such questionings going down to the minutest particulars of the picture and for ever having them resolved. For our satisfaction we do not even need to formulate the questions; we are conscious of endless numbers of relations about each of which the picture would yield a convincing answer if we pressed it. (For three examples of this see 3, 4 and 5.)

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We have seen here the kind of question and answer which formal relations provide; and the same holds of colour, which has so often been regarded as in some way a source only of an inferior kind of pleasure. There is of course an immediate sensual pleasure in some colours, a pleasure perhaps of a direct physiological kind—some of Titian's reds and blues may give us this; but this is a very small part of Titian's effect, and some great colourists give us very little of this direct pleasure. Our pleasure then is of this intellectual kind. We say, why is that colour in this place? and the answer comes, Oh, because of that other colour in that place, and we feel at once with a shock of pleasure that the answer satisfies us.

And I conceive that this process may go on down to very minute considerations of handling and texture. The description I have given here of questions and answers is only a kind of schematic diagram. What really goes on is a very rapid to and fro movement of our minds, a movement which is constantly accompanied by these shocks of pleasure which come when the mind passes from unrest to rest. And of course we get this satisfaction most readily from an artist with whom we have already established a sympathetic rapport, because we can accept his answers readily. But sometimes when we examine the work of an artist which we do not like as a whole, it is quite possible that if we put some of these questions deliberately and consciously the artist may be able to answer our questions satisfactorily. It is indeed by some such process that we can extend our powers of comprehension of art, and increase the acuteness of our sensual logic.

We have seen that the relation of exact symmetry is too simple and self-evident to give the specific intellectual pleasure of a work of art. It is not only a demonstrable and exact mathematical relation but a very simple one. We find that in a case like the Seurat there must be a very complicated series of relations which might be measured; and it has naturally occurred to people to examine whether these might also conform to some more complicated mathematical relation. Such an enquiry was even more immediately suggested by the appearance of

buildings. As you know, various canons of proportion have been discovered by measuring all the parts of a Greek Temple, and already the Egyptians had probably been led, by the very immensity and difficulty of their architectural problems, to study the mathematical statement of such relations as the size of columns compared to the spaces between them, the relation of the diameter of a column to its height and so on. The Greeks carried this much further and established more complicated systems emphasizing less obvious mathematical formulae. Again in the Renaissance this study was vigorously pursued and the relation known as the golden section was propounded and widely used, whilst in recent times more elaborate studies have resulted in the discovery of what is known as the  $\phi$  proportion or rather proportionate series. The mathematical statement of this is a complicated one, and like  $\pi$  it is an irrational number, which cannot be determined absolutely.

As  $\phi$  has been found applicable not only to a good many works of art but to the simpler forms of organic life such as the spirals of shells and growing plants, it has seemed to some people to be a kind of magic clue to all beauty and the fulfilment of a dream which has often haunted men of being able to turn out works of art as it were mechanically by the simple application of a formula—a kind of philosopher's stone of art. At one time I remember the *mot d'ordre* in the Paris studios was *l'art c'est le nombre*, 'art is a question of numbers', and here in  $\phi$  the magic number had turned up. But to indulge in such dreams is to forget the difference between art and beauty, for the work of art may well not be a beautiful thing in the sense in which a spiral shell is beautiful; and, whether beautiful or not, it is its power of communicating to us the artist's state of mind that gives it its importance. And it is precisely in the region which lies beyond any fixed and determined law that the spirit reveals itself.

We have passed then from the simple relation of exact symmetry through various more and more complex mathematical relations, such as those which apply to the inorganic world of the crystal, to  $\phi$  which is approximately—but only approximately notice—applicable to

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the simpler forms of organic life, and is perhaps often applicable to the general planning of a design or a building. But it is almost certain that in these intimate rhythms which make up the texture of a work of art, in those parts which are due to the artist's sensibility, we pass into regions which elude all mathematical statement as indeed do all but the simplest organic forms. We pass always from rigid and exact relations to complex and endlessly varying rhythms, which we may perhaps be allowed to call, hypothetically, vital rhythms, through which the artist's subconscious feelings reveal themselves to us by what we call his sensibility. It is in this region, then, which lies between rigid order and chaos, that the artist's sensibility functions; and as in the case of handwritings we may find examples which approach to a fixed order and others running through all the various degrees of freedom to something very like chaos, so in works of art we shall find endless degrees of fixity or freedom in the artist's expression.

I think it will be best at this point to look at a few examples to illustrate the general ideas which I have put before you. In the comparison of Greek, Chinese and Persian vases we shall find characteristic differences both in design and texture. There is in the design of the Greek vase (6) a clear articulation of the parts; a bare spreading base, a narrow support, and clearly defined body, neck and evaded lip, each a separate curve, and each curve of great geometrical regularity and simplicity. It is impossible to contemplate these curves for any length of time because they are immediately comprehended.

The Chinese bronze (7) contains the same ideas—base and urn, plus a lid which is also clearly felt—but though the parts are distinct they are not isolated from each other. The base spreads, but far less markedly, and it requires no separate system of curvature. Though it does not melt into the urn it is not violently separated from it. In the urn there is the idea of a bowl; and note how satisfactory its volume is. Here too there is a cylindrical body and evaded lip but they are comprised in a single flowing curve; and throughout the nature of the curves is vital—they vary and grow out of each other and are never purely geometrical.

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In the texture the difference is of the same nature. In the Greek vase everything is done to deny sensibility. Though the pattern is elaborate the execution is everywhere as near to mechanical precision as possible. All the sensibility of the artist has been smoothed out, the texture has become uniform, the design mathematical. The vase has all the marks of an object of luxury, which perhaps accounts for the widespread appreciation of this type in the ancient world. Though the main ideas of form in the Chinese urn are far simpler, underneath the strong control of the design we feel everywhere the play of vital forces suggesting infinite variations.

In the Persian vase (8) we have again a well-defined foot, body, neck and lip, but though they are clearly distinguished they are not contrasted. One curve leads into another, and there is far subtler complexity in each of the curves of the design. The ornament also flows in an unconscious but strongly held rhythm.

In the negro bottle (9) the main idea of form is curiously like the Chinese and it is carried out with an extraordinary subtlety in the variations from what we may call the abstract plan. The lid is tied on to prevent its falling off, as it is a bottle carried about the person. This led to the idea of the lateral flanges, which ingeniously stop just before the greatest bulge. Look at the curve of the top, and the curve of the moulding, the rounding off of the angle where the flange stops. The flange motion is carried on by very subtle triangular indentations. There is the idea here of binding the separate parts into a continuous sequence as opposed to the idea of sharp contrasts in articulation.

In the examples I have taken the Greek is the only one that seeks geometrical regularity and sharp articulation in plan and suppresses sensibility in texture. All the others in varying degrees seek for greater continuity in the plan and allow more to the unconscious in the execution.

It would be absurd to draw conclusions from these few cases. I only note in passing that probably the Greek examples were produced by the most intellectualized culture, the Persian is probably influenced by the

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nomadic culture of Arabia, but that the Chinese belongs to an organized civilization.

In this Egyptian example (10) taken from Tutankhamen's tomb we reach the high-water mark of the luxury effect. It outdoes Bond Street and the Rue de la Paix. The craftsman has achieved the tightest mechanical uniformity and exactitude; the artist has been completely suppressed.

We must remember that a great many crafts, especially in primitive civilizations, tend inevitably to produce irregularities and variations in the design. In this primitive textile (11) the main idea is one of elementary geometric simplicity. The only elements are rectangles of various sizes with right-angled triangles. Nothing could be more purely geometrical and more likely to produce monotony and dullness, since the mind accepts these forms instantly. And such would certainly be the result were it carried out by modern perfectly developed machinery. But the primitive weaver has not only allowed to the full the accidental play of his weaving, he has constantly varied the proportion and number of his units. Of course the question arises how far this may be mere carelessness and indifference and how far deliberate aesthetic preference, and in many cases it might be difficult to answer. But the mere fact that this is so brings to our notice a curious question. Artists continually use merely accidental variations of colour or surface to give variety to design, as for instance in the use of the graining of wood or in marbled papers (in which an accidental mechanical variation is used). And in many cases such accidental variations take the place of the variety of surface due to the artist's sensibility. So that we must suppose that part of the charm of sensibility of texture is due to its mere suggestion of the elements of chance, of the unexpected, fortuitous and gambling element in life which requires satisfaction as well as its contrary, the drive for order and inevitability.

In this instance (12), which is rather similar to the primitive textile which you have just seen, though it was designed by a modern English artist, there can be no doubt of the intention. He has taken a theme



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of almost daring geometrical simplicity, but, not relying only on the broken quality of the knotted surface of the rug, he has deliberately broken his rectilinears by small steps up and down; he has also made his shading sometimes perpendicular and sometimes diagonal. The effect of this is to allow us to contemplate a design which, if it had been perfectly regular, we should probably sum up in the statement—seven rectangles arranged in parallel. But these perpetual slight changes prevent us from ever passing on, as it were, to the mere mathematical generalization. Here I suspect is one of the secrets of the importance in art of surface sensibility. If the general plan is more or less conformable to a geometric idea the mind might be tempted to apprehend it merely as a case of a generalization (as it apprehends a diagram in Euclid); but the perpetual slight variations of surface keep the mind and attention fixed in the world of sensation. We are, as it were, forced to abandon our intellectual in favour of our sensual logic. I think we can indeed note from our personal experience that the majority of people find the intellectual apprehension of things easier, and always take any excuse to slip away from sensual into logical apprehensions. Indeed, I attribute to this tendency a good deal of the success of lectures on art. So that we must always bear in mind the tensions between these two modes of apprehension.

Take a more complex object. In this Greek statue (13) the surface is everywhere even, unaccented. The eye passes over its surface without finding anything to arrest it.

Our pleasure comes from contemplating the main relations of the planes and we should look in vain for other systems of plastic relations within these. But in Maillol's statue (14), though the main relations are even more clearly expressed at every point, these are, as it were, enriched by innumerable inner plastic variations, i.e. we can follow the artist's sensibility down from the main plan almost into the texture and grain of the stone. We get a high degree of surface sensibility.

### III

## VITALITY

**I**N my last lecture we tried to analyse the quality called sensibility, and I spoke of that quality as concerned with the texture rather than the organization of a work of art.

I showed that we found all sorts of variety of texture passing from one which conformed more or less exactly to some geometric or mathematical law to those free, vital rhythms which elude mathematical definition. I suggested that the approximation to mathematical order might naturally be expected of people who had a highly developed intellectual life like the Greeks. And this supposition is certainly borne out to some extent, for we find in the arts of primitive, barbaric and nomad peoples a very free expression of sensibility of texture, whilst the great civilizations which developed a high intellectual life tend to achieve geometrical order in their constructions.

Here, however, we touch on another aspect of the question. It is only in well-ordered and fixed civilizations that large architectural works can be carried out, and the mere construction of these works inevitably imposes geometrical order so as to control the force of gravitation. This leads to another opposition: between what we may call public and private works of art. And we shall expect to find private works of art more expressive of sensibility and public more indifferent to it.

At this point in our enquiry about sensibility we must consider the influence upon the work of art of certain biological forces.

We may, I think, assume that the ideal type of the work of art which we keep in mind in our aesthetic enquiries is the outcome of a purely free and biologically gratuitous (or useless) spiritual activity. I use 'spiritual' throughout in a rather special, but I think necessary, sense.

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I mean by it all those human faculties and activities which are over and above our mere existence as living organisms. Used in this sense it avoids any prejudgment of what particular faculties come into play, whether intellectual, affectional or what not. I say then that the ideal work of art is the outcome of a free spiritual activity and its reception implies a correspondingly free spiritual activity on the part of the appreciator. But it is evident to anyone who reflects on human life that our biological needs are so insistent and overwhelming that no activity is likely altogether to escape their influence, and I think it is evident that works of art are no exception to this.

Works of art have always had a great prestige value. Invading conquerors of a country do not only carry off gold and silver, they transport even at great cost large works of sculpture and painting. The possession of these works confers national prestige. And similarly the conquering millionaire carries off great works of art. He may of course desire to indulge in a pure spiritual pleasure in contemplating them, but he cannot be unaware that the knowledge that he possesses them causes him to be envied and sought after, even by a great many people who are themselves but little moved by works of art. They give him personal prestige in the society to which he belongs.

This is only one of many ways in which biological needs exert pressure upon works of art. But it is one, I think, which has a powerful influence on the expression of the artist's sensibility.

The art-object (forgive this unpleasant but convenient word), the art-object which is regarded by its owner primarily as evidence and symbol of his social prepotency ought by preference to be of a rare and precious material, and in its execution it ought to declare the high degree of skill of the craftsman, since the most skilful craftsmen are themselves rare and difficult to employ; and this craftsman should be shown to have spent great care and pains in the execution. And one of the ways of proving this is that when the object is already finished from the artist's point of view, he should devote a great deal of further time and care to obliterating all traces of his own handiwork—smoothing out and

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polishing down the marks of his tool. Let me remind you of one instance of this phenomenon, which is proof that it does exert great pressure. Rembrandt was, you know, a rather successful artist until his own pupil Gerard Dou spoilt his market by offering to the public pictures in which all traces of brushwork were effaced in a polished and licked surface. Dou not only achieved the exact representation of objects, which was to the public the chief meaning of a picture, but over and above that he saw to it that there was no trace left of how the illusion had been accomplished, and the enchanted public left Rembrandt for Dou.

Here then we get evidence of what I call the luxury effect on works of art. You have only got to stroll through Bond Street to see how evidently luxury objects are made with the utmost precision, and how the surfaces are mechanically exact and uniform. Look at metal cigarette cases or expensive china and you will see that no trace of an artist's sensibility is allowed ever to appear. One of the chief things that makes a pot or a piece of metal work aesthetically significant to us would make it utterly unsuitable for a Bond Street window unless it were in the 'Antique' department.

But this is not the whole of the story. If we consider the craftsman himself we shall find him as likely as not to be only too willing to co-operate in suppressing the traces of his own sensibility. We may, I think, hypothecate a 'poietic' or fashioning urge as one of the factors in the making of works of art. This is certainly a plausible hypothesis in view of the many ways in which man shows his drive to impress himself upon the external world. The fashioning of shapeless matter like clay into a preconceived shape is evidently one expression of this drive. Now since this feat is a difficult one, because of the resistances of matter, the maker will show his power over this most completely when the shape ultimately achieved is perfectly regular and even throughout, when it has mathematical or mechanical perfection. So that the craftsman *qua* craftsman is always trying to rival the infallibility of the machine. If the craftsman happens to be also an artist he may recognize that the

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expression of his own sensibility is significant and may even be content to pass as a clumsy craftsman rather than obliterate it. But the pride of the craftsman as such will always urge the suppression of sensibility in an art-object.

We have now got some idea of the number of factors which may be discerned when we consider the surface texture of an art-object.

- (1) A spiritual need for order.
- (2) The luxury effect.
- (3) The craftsman's pride in his skill.

All, or any, of these may intervene in varying degrees to bring about the result we see.

To-day I want to consider another quality of works of art which is very distinct, one about the presence or absence of which I think it is easy to agree, and yet one which it is impossible to define. It is the quality of vitality in artistic images. Some images give us a strong illusion that they possess a life of their own, others may appear to us exact likenesses of living things and are yet themselves devoid of life.

Now let me confess at once that I know very little about this quality. It seems to me very mysterious, and I find it difficult to allege any explanations of why it occurs when it does, by what exact processes the artist gives the illusion; and yet further I do not know quite what value we ought to attach to the quality, or what its relations are to other aesthetic qualities. I must confess that I have the habit, perhaps rather reprehensible in a Professor, of lecturing about subjects of which I know very little in the hope of gaining some clearer notions of them. I dare say we shall not get very far to-day, but we shall at least have looked inquisitively at a number of works of art, and we may note some rather strange facts, and with luck arrive at some suggestions of correlated ideas.

At all events we will take a series of examples which I have chosen from the point of view of comparative contrast in regard to vitality. The Egyptian fresco at Mai Dun (15) gives an admirably true de-

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scription of geese; the gestures are keenly observed; but they give me the idea of being descriptions of living things, not living images.

Whereas in the rough sketch of a Persian plate (16) I get just that idea of life. I even don't want to think which bird it is supposed to represent because it has this self-sufficing quality of its own inner life.

The Japanese artist in the 'Cock and Hen' (17) far surpasses the Egyptian in the wealth of his observation and the extreme realism of his result. And yet, is it alive? I think not.

Certainly, to my mind, this extremely free rendering of a wild boar (18) gives me more the impression of life. I want you to note here the possibility that this idea of life is in part due to the unconscious freedom of the rhythm of the drawing apart from its rather elementary representation.

The Lion's head (19) from the cornice of the Greek temple of Minerva at Palermo is undoubtedly very impressive. It shows acute observation of the main forms of a feline head and these have been used so as to give a strong decorative value to the work. But it seems to me to lack inner life. For one thing it seems almost to stand as a symbol of certain aspects of human nature—to express almost deliberately an idea of ferocity and dignity which is what men have always predicated of the lion. It lacks the vague undirected complexity of the animal itself.

Now the terra-cotta head of a pig from New Guinea (20) may very likely be a quite inferior work of art—for the time being we are refusing altogether to go into that question—but one cannot deny the vivid evocation of life. The artist has somehow seized the principle of the animal's life: it is not modified to suit any human preconception; it has no moral quality. It carries on its own strange inexplicable life, one that is quite indifferent to our demands on it or our sense of values.

Or again in these even ruder works (21), made by Brazilian Indians from the bark of trees, the same uncanny vitality comes through. These creatures are endowed with life. For the moment we need say no more than that.

Here (22-29) are some further examples taken almost at random from

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varying arts and periods so that we may get hold of this idea of vital and non-vital design independently of all preconceptions about styles and about primitive and fully developed art. In the first three the vitality is obvious in spite of a certain degree of stylization. There is much greater stylization in the negro mask (90), which may suggest that, contrary to what we should expect, stylization may not interfere at all with vital rhythms. In the Niobid (13), on the other hand, there is not only strong action but also violent emotion freely depicted; yet it is more like a statement about the state than a representation of the state itself. In the Donatello again (25) there is very little action, yet how strongly the inner tension of each man, and the reactions between them, are felt. Possibly this vital energy is due to the rhythm; but here at least we get evidence that realism need not destroy vitality any more than stylization does. But compare the Farnese bull (327), in which we have a veritable massacre which is nevertheless so exterior that it leaves even the participants quite cold.

The two reliefs, from the Parthenon (26) and from Autun Cathedral (27), are chosen so as to bring out the contrast in two styles which in some respects are closely similar. There is great freedom and naturalness of movement in the Greek relief but it is seen from without, relying on knowledge; whereas in the Romanesque capital the much less vehement gestures express the inner life far more intensely—see in particular the angel leaning round on the left.

The last examples, the Scythian animal brooches (28, 29), have at least revealed one interesting fact, namely that the vitality of an image—its power of communicating to us the feeling that it has an inner life of its own—is not at all dependent upon its being a likeness of a living thing. We may even suspect that complete likeness to a living thing will deprive us of that feeling—we shall think of the original as alive but not the image itself.

The Niobid (13), for example, is a very complete rendering of a living human figure; the likeness to a human being is very close. But these Negro figures (30), which are extremely incomplete with barely enough

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likeness for us to recognize what they represent, are yet vividly alive. We may suspect that it is only by suppressing every other aspect of the figure but those which suggest vitality that the artist can arouse in us the conviction of life.

It is extremely interesting to note how in the evolution of an art the power of making vital images appears and disappears. I can only touch on this very briefly by a few examples. When first a true Italian art arose out of the Italo-Byzantine tradition there was a sudden outburst of creative energy, and this was distinguished among other things by the intense vitality of the imagery.

This relief on the Campanile at Florence (31), which is due probably to Giotto's inspiration, shows this admirably. The movement here seems evidently the expression of the vital energy of the figures.

But this power was shared more or less by all the artists of the period. It is vividly seen in this great unknown painter whom we call the Cecilia Master (32)—here not only are the figures vital but we feel the common animation which the discussion has brought about between them. It would be rash to say that one could not express a dramatic event without vitality, but it is evident that such vitality in the figures as this is likely to enhance the dramatic effect.

Now this control of vital imagery disappeared as rapidly as it had come on. It faded out of Italian art almost before Giotto was dead and masters who had been vital in their youth ceased to be so in later life. This excellent and accomplished pupil of Giotto (33), painting exactly in accordance with Giotto's precepts, seems to me to fail of any power to vitalize the images he creates.

With the fifteenth century there came a second outburst of vitalizing power, though not so marked nor so widespread as that of a century earlier. Still such artists as Fra Angelico and Masaccio possess it in a high degree. But with the high Renaissance there was a revival of the Greek notion of an ideal of beauty—the idea, that is, of what a human being should be—the norm from which all individuals have gone astray and failed in one way or another. And as we might expect any



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such ideal or abstraction is inimical to vitality, for it is difficult to endow an abstraction with life. In Raphael's St Cecilia (34) we see the effects of this—the figure of the saint herself seems so much the expression of an ideal of regular formal beauty that she has but little life. I do not say this figure is markedly lifeless; the figure to the right, too, certainly has some feeling of inner life. Rather I get the impression that Raphael's native gift for vital imagery was inhibited and attenuated by the search for ideal beauty. And in the St Paul we see another cause of the same effect, namely the need for striking and noble gestures which the so-called grand manner demanded. In proportion as gestures conform to a rhetorical type they tend to lose the full complexity of living beings.

The St Mark (4) by Fra Bartolommeo is a striking example of what I mean, for Fra Bartolommeo certainly has vital power; but the careful disposition of the limbs according to a preconceived rhetorical idea of nobility and grandeur interferes with the illusion of life.

With the eclectics of the seventeenth century, with the Carracci and their followers, we find all illusion of life gone. Nothing could well be more external, descriptive and lifeless than the Carracci 'Childhood of Christ' (35). Remember I am not condemning Italian art of this period for this, merely noting the disappearance of this vitalizing power and noting that it is accompanied by a peculiarly conscious and deliberate pursuit of ideal beauty as revealed by the great artists of the high Renaissance. But if vitality had deserted Italy in the seventeenth century, it found in Holland and particularly in Rembrandt its supremest expression (36). For no one I think has ever surpassed Rembrandt in the power to communicate the idea of the inner life of his images. And here again we note that it is not inconsistent with a very complete representation of the natural object. But how clearly Rembrandt forces us to feel the inner life as dominating and controlling the pose, as functioning in every curve and direction.

Perhaps this quality is even more evident in such a slight drawing as this of a coach (37), where every line becomes as it were an indication

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of vital stress. Indeed, if it were not too paradoxical to talk of the vitality of an inanimate object I should like to claim it for this drawing. Nor is this claim quite as absurd as it sounds, for if the vital image is one which arouses the idea of an inner energy expressing itself in the form, we may also have in inanimate things the impress which they have received from life, as, for instance, old clothes may bear the stamp of the life that has informed them. So here Rembrandt's coach seems to convey a feeling of all that its use by living beings has imposed on it.

I should like to show you a modern master of vital imagery, Rouault (38). We cannot, I think, deny the almost disquieting sense of a sombre vital energy that inspires this figure of St John the Baptist.

Again let me remind you that I am not saying it is therefore a good work of art: for you will notice how heroically I have kept to my self-denying ordinance of not expressing approval or disapproval, of merely noting the presence and absence of a quality. I call attention to this because it is at this point that I am going to break down. But first let us sum up a few results, with regard to vitality. We have noted its presence in some primitive works which at all events until quite recently would have been judged beneath contempt as works of art, we have noted its presence in some works of the greatest masters like Giotto and also its absence in certain admired examples of Greek sculpture and in masters like Raphael and Fra Bartolommeo. And at this point it naturally occurred to me to ask—can I find vitality in a work of art which I should consider to be really bad, and the result of my enquiry was curious. For when I put together a number of these works which I had to regard as vital and which I also considered bad, I found that they almost all came under the heading of what is called Expressionism, and this I confess was an entirely unexpected discovery and made me want to know more about what we mean by Expressionism.

Expressionism is one of those vague words denoting a general tendency, and probably people would differ very much about whether such and such a work was Expressionist or not. It is a word which

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comes to us from Germany and Germany is the country whose art is most frequently Expressionist, though we shall find instances of it in many other places. In fact Expressionism is almost as marked a peculiarity of German art as Beauty (I use the word in its conventional everyday sense) is of Greek. As far as I can see the essential point of Expressionism is that the artist tries not only to realize his idea but to express to the world his feeling about his idea. He wishes to tell us not only what the experience was which led him to make the work of art, but what he felt about it. In effect the artist comes out from his work of art and nudges our elbow; he points to this and that and says, Don't you see what I mean? Or like a writer who cannot trust words to tell us his idea he underlines his adjectives. It would be more accurate perhaps to call such artists 'Impressionists', because besides expressing their idea they attempt to *impress* the spectator with its significance.

This is, of course, a far more difficult quality to determine than those we have examined so far. It is a question of a particular tone or manner in the artist's expression of his theme, and our estimates of these subtle shades of manner are far more likely to differ. So that it will be very likely that many of you will disagree with me. But let us try some examples.

This fourteenth-century German sculpture (39) may enlighten us. It is a soldier from a scene of Christ bearing his Cross. I do not think we can deny the intense vitality of this. Here the idea of brutal insolence is vigorously conveyed, but do you not feel that the dice are loaded? Like the villain of a bad novel, he hasn't got a sporting chance. And yet it is not a mere type or formula, it has personality and precisely that sense of being animated from within that we call vitality. Only one feels that the artist's mind was closed to the full reality, that having got his case he was going to state it regardless of what further qualities he was missing out. Here where the expression lends itself to caricature the idea that Expressionism is due to underlining is easy to grasp, but in this head of St Elizabeth (40) it is much harder to see; only here too I feel the same quality. Here too there is underlining. The artist has not merely stated

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his idea, he has said what he feels about it and what he wants us to feel. This too-evident nobility does not transpire from our contemplation of the image, it is imposed on us.

Perhaps this becomes clearer if one compares this figure by Donatello (41), also intensely vital and intensely expressive—only here one has no idea what Donatello felt or meant us to feel about it. It has all the complexity and fullness of a real character. It offers itself for our contemplation without any indication of what it expects of us or what Donatello expected of us.

In early German painting the underlining, the insistence of the artist that we shall be impressed by his vision is very evident, and in Grünewald's Crucifixion (42), which is generally accepted as one of the great masterpieces of German art, we cannot deny vitality of a kind; but again we are not left alone with the artist's vision: he has evidently tried to force us to have his idea—he has not been content to let it speak for itself. Everything that to a rather elementary nature appeared likely to heighten the idea of physical torment and mental agony has been exaggerated and reinforced. Probably people differ very much as to what effect such pressure on the part of the artist produces. I confess I am one of those cursed people who tend, when they are asked to feel such and such emotions, to feel nothing at all.

By way of comparison let us take this Crucifixion by Castagno (43). Here too the figures are very vital, but how utterly different is the artist's attitude. Here we are left alone with the vision. We can contemplate it as though we had come upon the scene unawares. Castagno hardly seems to have expected that we should come at all, whereas Grünewald hurried forward to tell us all about his vision.

The Chinese painting (44), attributed to Liang K'ai, belongs to the early thirteenth century, and shows that Expressionism has a long and respectable ancestry. I had already chosen this as an example of Expressionist art before I read the criticism on it written by a Japanese authority. But I found that the same idea had occurred to him, for he claimed it as one of the earliest examples of Expressionism. It represents

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the founder of the Zen sect tearing up scriptures which aroused his contempt, and I think you will agree that Liang K'ai has deliberately expressed the odious theologian in every stroke, even to the drawing of the pine branch above the holy man's head.

In this figure (45) of the God of Longevity by Korin I find real vitality, but again to my mind a very low aesthetic value, though here perhaps what I object to is not so much Expressionism as the vulgar ostentation of virtuosity,—though, when one considers it, the artist who displays his virtuosity also comes out from the work of art and puts his word in by pointing out how clever he is.

I fear you will think that our results to-day have been rather inconclusive. We have arrived at no very definite ideas about the value of this specific quality of vitality in artistic images. But I should like to suggest one consideration about it which ought to be borne in mind, and that is that our reactions in ordinary life towards living beings of any kind tend to be more vivid and intense than our reactions to inanimate things. We have some kind of sympathy with almost all living things. Even with plants we tend to identify ourselves, to feel them from within, as it were. Now as this reaction is one of ordinary life and not peculiar to the imaginative life of art, we ought to have some suspicion of the effect on us of works of art of strong vitality. We may mistake our reaction to living beings for our reaction to the artist's message. But at least we may say this, that if we find aesthetic satisfaction in a work of art it is probable that our satisfaction will be heightened if the images which arouse it suggest vital energy. And there I think for the time being I must leave it. Perhaps we have gained something by putting so many question marks into the text of our subject.

## IV

### EGYPTIAN ART

EGYPTIAN civilization occupies a unique position in our historical landscape. It is the only one of the great early organized civilizations (except China which lay beyond our ken) which managed to persist through those dark ages out of which Greek civilization emerged. It is thus the only one of those cultures which exercised a direct influence on the culture which we inherit. We can claim some sort of direct spiritual descent from Egypt, which is more than we can do from any other of the great early civilizations. But that descent is terribly remote. Even to the ancient Mediterranean world Egypt presented an exotic and unfamiliar aspect. This was part of its mysterious and romantic appeal to the imagination of Greek and Roman people. To them it had something, I imagine, like our own vague ideas about the Wisdom of the East, fascinating precisely because it was so indefinite and full of guessed-at possibilities; and more than once in our history we have turned to Egyptian art as bringing with it the flavour of romance and mystery. There was such an aesthetic craze in Roman times, connected I suppose with the patronage of the cult of Isis. Fashionable Roman ladies, thrilled with those glimpses of a future life, felt that their life on earth would become richer and purer if the pillars of their atrium were copied from Egyptian columns, which brought with them the stimulus to the imagination which the exotic so often possesses.

The men of the Renaissance also dabbled now and then in Egyptian art and finally the artists of the end of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries with their stylistic experiments cultivated Egyptian forms with some assiduity,<sup>1</sup> and even at times with some success in grafting it upon the native stock. We shall see that that experiment is

<sup>1</sup> One of the most assiduous efforts is to be found in the first floor of the famous café Pedrocchi in Padua built in 1830.

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full of significance from the point of view of the attitude to sensibility we are enquiring into.

Egyptian art, then, has always exercised a peculiar fascination upon the European mind, and one thing has helped to produce this effect, namely the peculiar consistency and conformity with itself of the Egyptian style. Perhaps more than any other art it has its own peculiar flavour—and that flavour is very strong and immediately recognizable to everybody, even those most ignorant of art. There is not a jerry-builder in England who would not be able if required to give an Egyptian flavour to a cheap desirable residence. It is indeed comparable to the Chinese style in this respect of its extremely potent flavour, and what is most remarkable is that in its age-long course Egyptian art always retained this stylistic consistency. Indeed, this is so marked that it is often not easy for an outsider to make any sort of true judgment of the period to which an Egyptian art-object belongs, whereas in European art changes of style are so marked that they at once jump to the eye of the uninitiated. Plato remarked on the ‘conservatism’ of Egyptian art: it was not lawful to introduce any novelty. By observing you will discover that the paintings and sculptures of the Nile valley executed millenniums ago are neither more beautiful nor more ugly than those turned out at the present day, but are worked according to the same formula. This is not to say that Egyptian art did not change and grow, did not acquire new powers and lose old, but that these changes never broke the outer skin of the style.

We must remember, however, that the same thing holds true of the art of Mesopotamia, as long as the Empires lasted. There too a specific flavour remains, with perhaps even less variety, for many centuries. I think the explanation is in both cases the same. It was due to the essentially conceptual notion of vision which was so firmly rooted in the habits of the people that it was never broken down. And here I must deal very briefly with a question which, although it lies rather outside our proper enquiry, and is no doubt familiar to you, is of such fundamental importance that it is worth restating.

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To the perfectly innocent and unsophisticated vision all aspects of an object would be both equally significant, or rather insignificant, and equally capable of representation. Such an eye would be as receptive of all aspects as a camera. But such an eye, though it must probably exist in the new-born infant, is very rapidly modified by the necessities of life. The mere mosaic of coloured patches which our actual vision gives us is thus very rapidly and definitely crystallized into *objects*, each of which has more or less significance and interest for us. And this vivid interest in objects, which is urged on us with all the force of the instinct of self-preservation, causes us to pay most attention to those aspects of an object which appear most to distinguish it from its surroundings, and this aspect almost always is that which gives the largest extension in the field of vision. This aspect becomes, as it were, the symbol or sign of the object, so that when the verbal symbol, the name of the object, is mentioned we get a mental image of that characteristic aspect. Thus, if I say the word 'coin', you are likely to see something like a circle, which is the aspect of a coin in its greatest lateral extension. And if you want to suggest a coin to another person you will draw a circle rather than a straight line.

Children, who have already lost the innocent indifference of the eye long before they begin to draw, show always in their drawings a highly conceptualized vision.

To show with what vigorous logic children apply the principles of conceptual drawing, look at this (46), which I collected a long time ago in my nursery. The theme was the sea-shore. To the right the child drew the shore not as he, from his three feet of elevation, could ever have seen it, but as he knew it to be and as it would appear in its greatest extension, with its curved edge and its pebbles and its boats drawn up; then there had to be a boat at sea, and for this the vision had to be turned through a right angle so as to get the most extended characteristic aspect of a boat.

When once the child has been provided with a collection of these characteristic symbols for objects he has all he wants, with them he can





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tell himself any stories he wants and better than in words, for these visual symbols carry with them more of the palpable external reality of the things than the names can. It is in fact an alternative form of literature, and it is scarcely a step from such image-symbols to hieroglyphic writing.

This conceptual imagery, so vigorously expressed in children's drawings, obtains also in almost all early art. That it did not occur to anything like the same extent in the earliest drawing of all, that of palaeolithic man, is one of the strangest facts in art history, but we have not time to go into that now. Since neolithic times—with the possible exception of the art of the Bushmen which follows to some extent the palaeolithic traditions—all early art has been strongly conceptualized, all images tend to represent objects rather than appearances, and objects therefore as seen in their widest lateral extension. Egyptian art shows one of the completest exploitations of this method which has ever occurred.

This relief (47) is a characteristic example. The head is in profile, the shoulders and breast full face, the legs again in profile. It is as though the human figure had been pressed as botanists press plants, carefully spreading each leaf and petal out as flat as possible. Such a work as this, and it is typical of the greater part of Egyptian imagery, is only a highly developed and accomplished child's drawing. Like it, it envisages objects of interest to the artist and his public and it seeks to call to mind these objects exactly as words do, except that it fills in the word with some sensual enrichment and objectivity. We notice then that an Egyptian relief is a story told in a series of recognized symbols, and that the hieroglyphic inscription which accompanies it is only a repetition in a shorthand form—the difference between the two being chiefly that by a fixed convention the shorthand hieroglyphic can tell a good deal more of the relations of the objects to one another than the longhand relief can. It can give the names of the persons, the when and the how of the event. In short, such an art is an art of pure illustration; it is essentially an alternative form of literature. And the Egyptians elaborated this

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double art of narrative to an extraordinary pitch of perfection, so that on the one hand they refused to make the step from the hieroglyphic to the alphabetic script, they refused, that is, to abandon all traces of the sensual aspect of the thing in their writing; and on the other hand they refused to explore appearances beyond what was demanded for the clearest comprehension of the object as such. This close connection between early imagery and literature is of great importance—we may almost summarize the history of art as the history of the gradual conquest of the world of appearance by the artist. It sometimes surprises us to note how slow and painful that conquest has been whenever it has been undertaken, but the fact is that there are immense psychological barriers placed in the way of the enterprise. The interests of life are so closely bound up with objects, their recognition is of such vital importance, that the discovery of significance in appearances seems at least as futile and gratuitous as the discovery of scientific truth appeared at its inception. Indeed this feeling of the futility of the study of appearance has never ceased to operate, and to this day, the public and its agent the picture-dealer are always trying to drive the artist out of the world of appearance, of which he is at once the revealer and the sole ruler, back into the world of objects where the historian, the man of letters and even the thinker are more at home than he is.

We need not be surprised then that the Egyptians were perfectly satisfied with this conceptual imagery—we need not be surprised that they continued to practise it with only the slightest modifications, century after century and even millennium after millennium. What should surprise us far more are the much rarer instances where men have suddenly launched out into the world of appearance. Indeed, had bas-relief and painting been the only forms of art they probably never would have done so. It was sculpture, with its enforcement of the third dimension, that gave the spur to this enquiry. Anyhow, we note that in very early times the Egyptians showed extraordinary accomplishment in the execution of conceptual imagery. For example, in the royal palettes (48) of King Narmer of the First Dynasty, i.e. round about

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3000 B.C. (and we might have gone back much earlier), we find the most perfect finish and accomplishment; there is nothing the least tentative or experimental about this art. This conceptual imagery is already completely understood, and we note that there is no trace of sensibility in the execution. Nor is there anything vital in the images—all has already been flattened and rolled out into a mechanical perfection.

We see the same qualities in their bowls and pots shaped from alabaster blocks at a very early date. There is the same insistence on finish, on uniformity and regularity, the same simple insensitive geometric forms in the galb, and clear articulation of the parts—the qualities and defects of Greek vases.

The surprising fact we have to note then is that if, as we must suppose, this civilization arose out of some primitive barbaric culture, the qualities which still mark the art of primitive races, the astonishing vital force of their imagery and the free, almost abandoned, play of sensibility, are already completely suppressed at an incredibly early date, polished and mechanical perfection of craftsmanship having replaced them. Are we to take this as one of the insignia of a settled civilization or were the Egyptians as a race lacking in sensibility and feeble in their grasp of vital rhythms? For I think it is a legitimate assumption that the general stock of different races have different aptitudes for art and different fundamental types of sensibility to artistic form. I believe we have a right to assume this on the analogy of similar racial differences in other faculties. But I think that the factor of racial predisposition is always one of the hardest to isolate from other factors in artistic production, such as the form taken by traditional practice and all the various social and economic factors that may impinge on the work of art. But for what it is worth, merely as a provisional guess at exploring the phenomena, I will give you my own impression. My notion is that the Egyptian people were among the most highly gifted for the arts of design of any that we know, but that in the long ages of Egyptian history their art production was so dominated by economic and religious forces that their innate

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qualities very rarely came through to full expression. I am led to this view by contemplating such works as the ape of King Narmer (49). No doubt this is a marvellous piece of realistic observation, but it is far more than that; it has that special quality of vitality, of expressing the inner life of the beast, which we studied in the last lecture. And the treatment is sensitive throughout: the artist has seized the main plastic relations with extraordinary grip—look at the bony structure of the eye orbit and the bony prominence of the nose—and he has felt the transitions from one plane to another with extreme sensitiveness and stated them with a reticence and subtlety which show how certain he was, how little he felt the need to exaggerate or underline. Moreover, he has refused to add any picturesque details either to convince one of the reality of his image or as an excuse for decorative display. Think what pretty patterns might be made out of the hair or the wrinkles on the nose, here only just adumbrated, but with what extraordinary effect.

And now here is the surprising thing. This ape bears the name of King Narmer, the same king for whom that official palette was made. This is very disconcerting. It is not at all as it should be. We like in our art histories to have an archaic period where the artist is inspired by grand and sublime ideals, but is struggling with technical difficulties. We like this to be followed by a golden age where all the difficulties are at last overcome and the grand ideas come out in their full glory, and then a decadence where all is frivolous and brilliant but senseless virtuosity. With a nice programme like that, art history becomes a fairly simple matter, and the examiners always know what the proper answer is to any question. But here is an art which gives us at this very early stage two hopelessly irreconcilable pieces, one a masterpiece of profound plastic feeling executed by a man who seems altogether unaware of technical difficulties and instinct with life; the other a piece of sheer craftsmanship using a fully conventionalized idiom with no sense of freshness of feeling, of primitive sincerity and so forth, a pure luxury product. There are no doubt certain movements and changes discernible in Egyptian design, but it is hard to bring them into any

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consistent scheme and—and this is the important thing—the aberrations of individual works from the norm are more striking and more important than the changes in the general tradition. Even so, this ape remains something of an exception even in this exceptional art. As far as my enquiries have gone no other animal figure quite comparable to this in vitality and sensibility emerges in the millennia that follow.

If I am right, one explanation of the relatively unchanging quality of Egyptian art is the fact of the relief and the wall-painting being so closely bound to literature. But this one thinks need not affect the sculpture in the round, and at an early period I suspect that this is true. For there is another sculpture even earlier than the last—the “Ivory King of Abydos” (50, 51), one of the pre-dynastic kings—and again we are astonished at the clear imaginative grasp of the plastic rhythms. It also is intensely vital; the way the old man’s head is sunk between his shoulders is consummately felt, and note the subtle feeling which has dictated the slight break in symmetry, the inclination of the head to one side. Such a movement seized from life with a clear sense of its significance will not appear again in Egyptian art for something like 2000 years and then only for a moment. Again there is no struggle with technique. The artist has full and easy command of everything. See the free sensibility with which the features are modelled without any archaic harshness. It is true that the greatest works are the least characteristic of national limitations and style. This figure and the ape are not so very evidently Egyptian, and we cannot postulate, even for this very early period, a golden age, for most of the art is, like the palette, deadly polished craftsmanship. Still these two statues (probably there were many more which have not survived) remain to show what profound sensibility, what serene plastic control some early Egyptians possessed. Sculpture at all events was not yet frozen as hard as the relief.

But the frost was not long in coming. For in the portrait of King Chephren (52), though there is great realism, it is of an external and descriptive kind; there is no feeling of inner life and all traces of sensibility in the handling have been polished away. The statues of these

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early dynasties, such as the well-known scribe of the Louvre (53), are often praised for their realism, but this is already quite different from the realism of the two pre-dynastic statues I have shown you. It is like the Chephren head, descriptive and without vital rhythm, though perhaps one of the finest works of the period. It does indeed retain something of the consistency of a vital rhythm in the movement in spite of the rigid symmetry of the pose, and the plastic rhythms are clear and strong with finely felt transitions from the broad base made by the legs leading up to the well-supported head. In later versions of the same subject every trace of plastic rhythm and sensibility is gone. The muscles of the stomach are used to make a neat decorative pattern on the body; there is no structural or plastic harmony between head and body and legs. It is pure and quite unintelligent craftsmanship. Description, decoration and mechanical finish have become the only preoccupations of the sculptor.

The Twelfth Dynasty ushered in an age of great prosperity and political stability, but the art is more than ever circumscribed by its political and religious utility. When we find that Amenemhet I had ten identical colossal portraits made for his pyramid, and his successor sixteen, we can see that aesthetic quality was not likely to be at issue. The statue was supposed to have the power of preserving the life of the king in the other world. It fulfilled biological needs: whether those needs were real or imaginary is of no consequence. The art of this time is more than ever a public art made to enhance the ruler's prestige or preserve his memory. In many reliefs these qualities are evidently predominant. Economy was not neglected, for instead of cutting away the background round the reliefs a sharp incision just outside the contour replaced it, resulting in an increased legibility in the work regarded as literature, but a rather disastrous effect on it as plastic art. Legibility has become a further motive to suppress sensibility. The wall-paintings show how far the desire for legibility, precision and a sharp clean contour, together with a certain decorative effect, had destroyed all vitality and all sensibility of line. They become nearly as geometric as my copy

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of Paul Klee's picture (1). The same holds of the minor arts of this time, showing that even such private arts as jewelry rejected everything else but mechanical perfection and tight precision.

The New Kingdom which followed the expulsion of the Asiatic invaders certainly brings a breath of new life into the art of Egypt. Something may be divined already in the reliefs of Queen Hatshepsut; still more perhaps in the new architecture of Dar el Bahari (292). In the reign of Amenophis III the change is still more marked. The lion of Amenophis (54), for instance, is one of the few Egyptian things in the British Museum in which I can find some aesthetic significance. Although it is ennobled and sentimentalized, it has something vital in the rhythms of the pose; and although there is a tendency for decorative values to be substituted for plastic, these are not sharply accented and insisted on. The evidences of sensibility in the modelling are not altogether obliterated.

Or take these small statuettes (55, 56), also of the Eighteenth Dynasty, though I do not know exactly to which period they belong. Here there is in spite of the too evident finish of the craftsman some delicacy of feeling in the slight turn of the girl's head to the right and a fine rhythmic feeling for its poise on the shoulders. The little negress is done with less feeling; it remains external and descriptive in its realism.

Just to recall to you the standards we tried to set up last time in the matter of sensibility and vitality, I should like to compare our Egyptian idea of a negress with the Negro vision (88). You will see at once how far even this slightly more sensitive and vital art of the Eighteenth Dynasty is from the vivid intensity of expression of the negro sculptor. Here indeed is the indubitable inner life expressing itself through every particle of the surface, through all the ever varying complexities of the rhythm and of the surface modelling.

Another work of the Eighteenth Dynasty is the Head of a Woman (57). Again I do not know the exact period. I wish I did, because the question whether this comes before or after the extraordinary aesthetic revolution which we are approaching is of great interest. Anyhow it is a

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work of the rarest, most subtly imaginative kind; a work in which sensibility of modelling is pushed to the finest point. It is true that it retains the strict frontality and symmetry of Egyptian sculpture and that the volumes of the body and arms are not very clearly felt nor very clearly related to the volume of the head, but the treatment of the mask is of the rarest beauty. Nothing I think in Greek or Roman portraiture approaches it in subtlety and sensibility. I say I should like to think that this belongs to the reign of Amenophis III, because that would render a little less miraculous, a little less incredible, the extraordinary aesthetic revolution accomplished under his son Amenophis IV, or Akhenaten as he called himself. There are indeed signs that the new conception of religion to which Akhenaten devoted himself were already prepared by his father; but even allowing the utmost possible to this account, the figure of Akhenaten remains one of the most surprising in all history. His notion of a single God who was the creator and upholder of the universe was already centuries in advance of his age, but the conception of this God as beneficent, his emphasis on the joy and beauty of life, seems like an anticipation of Franciscan Christianity. But he went even beyond this in wishing to abolish from the idea of a future life all that was monstrous and horrible, and his deprecation of any idea of his own divinity—though all Pharaohs were conceived as divine—the representation of himself in his public effigies as a simple human being engaged in scenes of purely domestic happiness, does not seem to belong to the ancient world at all, and is none too common in the modern. It is not surprising that this poet, dreamer and idealist lost his empire through incapacity to bring his mind to bear on the details of administration. It seemed far more important to realize in his new capital of Aketaton his sublime dreams of human life carried on in surroundings of the highest attainable beauty. All this, did we know of it only by description, might be put down as the wild exaggeration of flattering officials. But we have the text of Akhenaten's hymn to the Sun, which anticipates one of the finest of the Psalms, and still more we have the undeniable fact that in the immediate entourage of the king, and



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evidently under the stimulus of his inspiration, there grew up an art unlike any art that had been seen before, and unlike any that was to be seen again for about 3000 years. This statue (58) is an official portrait of the king. As you see, this shows scarcely any deviation from the traditional official art. There is perhaps an unusual tenderness and subtlety in the modelling of the face, but otherwise everything is as usual. There is the tight precise inexpressive surface, the decorative and schematic treatment of the muscles and the folds of the drapery. The head of the Karnak statue of Akhenaten, however (59), is quite another matter. It is something unheard of thus to abandon the impassive expressionless formality of the royal statue. Indeed the exaggeration and distortion are so violent that it is in the nature of a caricature, but a serious caricature in which everything is done to give to the face a strange enigmatic and disquieting power. Here, born out of all due time, is a piece of modern expressionism such as M. Bourdelle might have perpetrated. Perhaps the comparison is hardly fair to this very striking work, but it will give you a hint of what I find in it myself. For I cannot find in it the quality of true vitality nor the finer aspects of a true plastic sensibility. It is expressionistic, and by that I have suggested that we mean an art which tries to arrive at the effect of vitality by conscious and deliberate emphasis and not by a penetrating and imaginative grasp of vital rhythms. Had the reign of Akhenaten produced only this it would be startling enough, since this stands out in strange isolation from the endless series of Egyptian portraits, but fortunately there is far more and far better.

This head (60) for instance is the king's portrait by his own special artist, Thutmosis, who claims in an inscription to have been the pupil of the king, whatever the exact significance of that phrase may be. And here you see we get something altogether new and different. Here at least is intense vitality—forms which betray the inner life. And we get a sensibility in the surface modelling of incredible delicacy and finesse and yet the rhythmic harmony is all-pervading and unbroken. And, once more, how little Egyptian this is. Nothing else in ancient art is

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like this. It would be more at home among the masterpieces of the Italian Renaissance, next door to Donatello, than anywhere else in the world. This in the history of art is something like a miracle, something we should refuse to believe if there were any possibility of explaining it away. The two other masks by Thutmosis (61, 62) are plaster casts from statues—they were probably kept as records of his work by the sculptor—and about twenty of them were found in his studio. It is rather strange and not a little unfortunate that not one found its way to our National Collections. They are both astonishing in the penetrating understanding which they show of plastic form as expressive of life and character. And the realism is no merely imitative and descriptive realism; the form has been felt in its larger significant relations, and there is no emphasis on those minute details which give an air of likeness. When we look at them we do not think, Ah! there must have been someone that this is very much like. We do not refer them to something else; we are in presence of life and character itself. The right-hand one is extraordinarily Donatellesque. Look at the Zuccone (41) for comparison. As I say, there were about twenty of these masks left in Thutmosis's studio of which we have none in England, but fortunately we have one supreme work of this moment, and I should guess probably by Thutmosis himself. This little masterpiece (63), which is supposed to represent a daughter of Akhenaten, was rescued for University College by Flinders Petrie, to whom we owe the discovery of Tel el Amarna. In its effortless grasp of the plastic rhythm of the body as a whole and in the delicate sensibility of the modelling this surpasses, I think, all that Greece was to accomplish. It jumps the centuries and millennia. I have a cast of it which to my great delight a well-known French art critic believed to be by Maillol, and indeed hardly anyone guesses that it is Egyptian. There is of course an unmistakable trace of the Egyptian tradition in the two sharp lines of the stomach and thighs (though these are exaggerated in this photograph).<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> R. F. here showed three reliefs of Akhenaten, but no notes of what he said about them remain.

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With the death of Akhenaten all his attempted reforms of religion came to naught. The reaction led by the outraged priests of Amon whom he had tried to replace by Aten was overwhelming. His capital was deserted and everything possible was done to obliterate his memory. Had the priests succeeded completely, and had all memory of this chapter in Egyptian history perished, our opinion of Egyptian art would have been very different. We should never have guessed what marvels of sensibility lay concealed beneath the rigid surface of their official art. You see now what gave me the grounds for my suggestion that the Egyptian race had quite rare and peculiar aptitudes for art, had a singularly acute and delicate sensibility, but that, owing to a number of social and religious causes, and also owing to the close connection of art and literature, this sensibility very rarely found expression.

Akhenaten's son-in-law was forced by the religious reactionaries to change his name to Tutenkhamen—Amen for Aten—and the recent discovery of his remains proves that Akhenaten's new art was as thoroughly proscribed as his religion. I need not inflict on you any more of the expensive vulgarities, the polished absurdities of Tutenkhamen's tomb furniture—the specimen you have seen is enough (10)—but I should like you to look at Tutenkhamen on a leopard (64), which is a very curious piece, because it is so absurdly paradoxical. How came it that this polished and vacuous figure of the king, more lifeless than a doll, was put on to so rugged and vital a piece of sculpture as the leopard which bears him? Was some wretched survivor of the Amarna school allowed to do the subordinate and accessory work of modelling the leopard whilst the figure of the king was reserved for an approved official artist? That sounds as fantastic as imagining Sir Frederick Leighton asking Degas to do the accessories of a picture, but what are we to say of an art that admitted in a single object the juxtaposition of such violently contrasted conceptions of design!

The succeeding period of the great Ramesid Pharaohs re-established the Empire, and the art became more frigidly official and purely propagandist than ever (65). But the strange story of Egyptian art is

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not even then closed. Nothing in it, apart from the miracle of Akhenaten, is stranger than the Saiti revival. After centuries of chaotic internecine struggle, after Nubian and Assyrian conquests, the moment the Saiti rulers re-established an ordered government, the inveterate habit of artistic creation reasserted itself and some of the most charming, if not the greatest, works of Egyptian architecture were carried out. The revival was run on almost pedantically antiquarian and archaistic lines, obsolete words and religious formulas were sedulously adopted, and artists followed ancient models with slavish care. But none the less something new crept in, as you may see from this portrait head (66), which is dated by Egyptian authorities as late as 400 B.C. It is not I think a great or vital work of art. Its realism is of the external and descriptive kind. The artist relies on the sharp delineation of minute particulars rather than on the profound internal rhythms. It is altogether of a different order from Thutmosis's work. It is more akin to Flemish portraiture of the fifteenth century than to the greater masters of plastic imagination. We note that anxious insistence on sharp details of surface, on wrinkles of the skin and isolating contours, which distinguish such a descriptive conception. These are the things which an artist whose sensibility has enabled him to penetrate below the surface takes as it were in his stride, but which the descriptive artist clings to with desperate tenacity, since they are the only facts really grasped by his superficial vision.

## V

# MESOPOTAMIAN AND AEGEAN ART

## MESOPOTAMIA

**M**Y raid into Mesopotamian art must be even briefer and more superficial than my survey of Egyptian. Fortunately or rather unfortunately there is much less to detain us, though there are some very curious and puzzling phenomena.

The Sumerian civilization of Mesopotamia stands as the extreme south-western province of a great culture which had already reached nearly to its highest development before 3000 B.C. That culture spread to the east as far as Mohenjo Daro in the Indus valley, to the north as far as Anau in Turkestan, and as we shall see also to the Caucasus. It is becoming increasingly probable that its centre and perhaps its original growing point was somewhere in Persia. One day we may be able to link up all the parts of this culture, but we already know that the Sumerians had contacts with their contemporaries in Mohenjo Daro, because objects of Indian origin are found in Sumerian tombs. It also seems probable that all the material elements of the civilization had been developed at an extremely early date, possibly before the descent into the Euphrates valley.

My impression is that the Mesopotamian peoples never formed the habit of artistic creation so fully as the Egyptians—for one thing they broke away very early from hieroglyphic writing to a more convenient script. They were essentially a practical and commercial people, and one guesses that they lingered less lovingly over their sensual pleasures than the Egyptians, that life was more hurried and more insistent. But along with that went an intense vital energy which transpires in surprising ways in their early art.

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None the less, as in Egypt, we are met at the very outset by the paradox of an excessively finished, over-refined and sophisticated craftsmanship. The pottery (67-9) known as Susa I, which dates from before 3000 B.C., is, as you see, not only highly stylistic, the natural forms having become completely geometrized, but the craftsmanship is exceedingly perfect. The regularity and precision of the form has almost obliterated the potter's plastic sensibility and he has concentrated all his powers on making vessels of the sort of exaggerated thinness that was hardly attained again till the later porcelains of China and eighteenth-century European ware. I do not pretend to know exactly what the relations between Susa I and Mesopotamia are, but I think no one doubts some relation, and indeed very similar ware occurs in Mesopotamia. Anyhow, we find from the first the same tendency as in Egypt to exalt craftsmanship above sensibility: we find the same tendency to achieve the object of luxury. On the other hand, most of the early plastic work of Sumeria shows, as I say, an intense and often a crude vitality. In some of the small clay figures of chariots drawn by animals, asses sometimes and bulls, there is no doubt that a certain vital energy comes through in spite of the elementary plastic control.

The same vital energy is apparent in reliefs of the same time, allied to a far greater comprehension of form. None of the pre-dynastic reliefs of Egypt give one the same intimate sense of vital rhythm in the interpretation of animal forms.

This bull (70), representing an early type of work, shows great plastic power. It has not anything like the subtle sensibility shown by the early Egyptian ape—like all Sumerian art it is less civilized—but, on the other hand, though the pose is symmetrical it is less rigidly frontal. The influence of the four sides of the block out of which it is carved is not nearly so apparent.

This slavery to the flat surfaces of a statue from which the Egyptians never freed themselves, and which generally is overcome only gradually and by a long evolutionary process, did not apparently affect the early Sumerian sculptors. Certainly the bull from Al Ubaid of about 2900 B.C.

shows an astounding feeling for free movement, and the bull and ass (71, 72) are even more surprising. Look at the trotting pose of the ass. It is true that there is a curious want of style in these figures, especially in the ass. They seem to be almost photographic, as though some Sumerian artist had retained that power of eidetic imagery of palaeolithic man. But in both cases this seems to be something of an accident. The feeling for movement had not been grasped as an essential part of the plastic idiom and in fact, as far as I know, we never meet with anything at all like these again; and we shall see in the statues of human beings of succeeding ages nearly as complete an adherence to frontality and symmetry as in Egypt. There is indeed something curiously provisional and amateurish about almost all the furniture of the celebrated tomb of Shub-Ad of Ur. The artists produce an effect of luxury and richness, but with most unsatisfactory materials, gluing bits of shell and lapis lazuli on to surfaces with the messy bitumen that lay to hand; and again no certainty or assurance of style directs their efforts. There is a kind of incoherence in the art of this period which is strangely disquieting and unfamiliar. Many of the objects have a kind of caddis-worm effect of things stuck together almost anywhere, with a rather childish delight in trivial realism, such as the blue beard gummed on to the gold head of a bull on the queen's harp (73). Again, the reconstruction of the temple front of Al Ubaid seems almost incredibly incoherent in the way in which animal figures are stuck about and in the want of any intelligible transitions between the parts. On the other hand, the technique of metal work shows great accomplishment and something of that tight insensitive mechanical precision that marks early Egyptian utensils (74). An exception is the vase of Entemena from Lagash (75), which attains something of grandeur in its proportions, and has a certain sensibility in the galb which reminds us, very distantly, it is true, of the Chinese vases. The decoration is already highly stylized, the figures being arranged with heraldic symmetry, but something of vital energy survives in the drawing and poses of the beasts, and there is a fine sense of the proportions of the figures to the vase as a

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whole. But here again, we are in the presence of an isolated and, as far as I know, unique example. Evidently the constantly disturbed political history of Mesopotamia with its perpetual civil wars between cities may be held to explain the sudden appearances and disappearances of efforts which in better circumstances might have developed into a splendid and consistent tradition.

One period of relative quiet we can fix on in the age of Gudea at Lagash and at this moment (about 2500 B.C.) such a consistent tradition is developed. But we must begin with an earlier example of human sculpture. The portrait (76) of an official from Tel-el-Obeid dates from about 3000 B.C. Here that gross superabundant vital energy which distinguishes early Sumerian art is strikingly evident. There is nothing of the almost photographic realism of the mule; on the contrary, it shows very little direct observation, the proportions are utterly incorrect, the mask takes up nearly all the surface of the skull, the eyes are many times too big. But none the less, the energy of the inner life comes through, and though there is no subtlety of sensibility in the modelling, such crude feeling as there is is not polished down or obliterated. The head (77), which may be Gudea himself, is only a few hundred years later, but crude vital energy has here been harnessed to a more deliberate purpose. There is by now a real sense of plastic sequence and harmony of proportions, but I think the vitality, the sense of personality and character still survives. It would be too much to say that this is a supreme work of plastic imagination, but it comes nearer perhaps to that than anything else that Mesopotamian art achieved. In other heads a process of stylization set in. A purely decorative formula was evolved for the hair, so that it became entirely schematic, and similarly the eyebrows became decorative insertions contradicting the plastic sequence. The eye was also stylized, but in a more sensitive way, so that it took account of the subtlety of the natural form—though stylized it was not schematic. Apart from the stylistic isolation of the features, however, the modelling of the masks is often of extraordinary delicacy and sensitiveness, the feeling for the salience of the cheek-bone



and the transition to the fleshier texture of the cheeks, and again the subtle unemphatic comprehension of the muscles of the mouth, belong to the last refinements of sculpture. And yet in this paradoxical world of Sumerian art, nothing of this persists in the figures of the time. They are squat and humpish renderings, often of seated forms, generally far too small for the heads, in rigidly symmetrical poses, with no sense of vital rhythms whatever and executed with a rigid frontality. Sometimes in the standing figures there is more understanding of plastic rhythm (78). The Susan queen (79) of about 1400 B.C. is, however, quite exceptional. There is a real coherence and vital power in the pose, and the modelling of the bust and the arms shows an unusual sensibility which however gives way in the mechanically decorative and schematic treatment of the robe. This fragment of a head (80) belonging to the Third Dynasty of Ur about 2200 B.C. recalls the Gudea type. It looks as though the artists of Ur had escaped the stylizing tendencies of the last Gudea heads, at least the hair and eyebrows still remain within the plastic sequence; but the features, though not so isolated, are much less understood, and there is no trace of the consummate modelling of the mask. Whatever aesthetic qualities the early art of Mesopotamia possesses—and we have seen that in some respects they are considerable, that at least they promised now and again a more splendid development than was actually achieved—whatever qualities it had must, I think, be attributed to the Sumerians who, whatever they were, were non-Semitic. A Semitic population existed from very early times in Mesopotamia, and about 2000 B.C. under Hammurabi they began to achieve political predominance, which became consolidated and firmly established under the Babylonian kings. From this time on the art of Mesopotamia was crystallized into a rigidly conventional and official system. When once the Semitic power became predominant the story of Mesopotamian art loses almost all significance for us. The early art of Assyria shows the existence of a culture closely allied to the Sumerian but far less developed and the remains are relatively insignificant, but the great Semitic Empire which dominated and terrorized the whole ancient world shows

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an extraordinary productiveness. It was, however, an exclusively public official art of propaganda, and developed a technique admirably suited for the purpose of recording the exploits and grandeur of the monarch. The record is one of unparalleled ferocity and cruelty, and the monuments tell with complacency of the numbers of captives killed by the king's own hands. As war propaganda and as a means of paralysing resistance by terror, Assyrian art was clearly very successful. All the motives are derived from Sumerian art, but are given a new character by the new demands on the artist's descriptive power and the need for bold decorative effect.

It was in Assyria that the decorative treatment of flat surfaces (81) attained its richest development, and the study of the latest developments of this style and its radiations and connections is very important for art-history, but the Assyrians themselves never broke through the mechanical rigidity of their style. In their treatment of the figure they succeed in suppressing all notion of vital rhythms. The men move like Robots stuffed with cotton-wool. Their exaggerated musculature has become a decorative convention: there is no hope here of the qualities we are looking for. In Assur-bani-pal's hunting scenes in the British Museum, we touch I think the high-water mark of the descriptive power of the Assyrian artists. One does not wish to deny that as illustration it is remarkable. The pose of the wounded lioness (22) is a marvellous record of a close observation, but it does not go beyond that. The variety and complexity of scenes which the artists were called on to describe did lead them to extend the range and intensify the acuteness of their understanding of natural form, though this remained as we have seen essentially external and illustrational. None the less, a quite new power begins to be evident—namely the power of grasping objects in their spatial relations. This we generally think of as a relatively late development of art—as we shall see later on the Greeks only began to achieve it in the last period—and this makes this the more curious in these Assyrian reliefs. Here too it was a late development and the most striking examples belong to the seventh century, just before the fall of

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the Assyrian power (82). The artist still conceives all the forms in a non-plastic decorative schema, though he employs them in a pose taken direct from life; and even allowing that our unknown Assyrian was a Landseer raised to a higher power, this does not bring us near to those qualities of vital rhythmic sensibility which we are concerned with.

No doubt the Babylonians, and after them the Assyrians, constructed imposing and grandiose monuments. They developed a fixed, but very limited and inelastic, decorative treatment and a very adequate descriptive narrative style in their reliefs; and there are all sorts of qualities in this art which merit understanding. But there is too little evidence of any free aesthetic expression for us to delay when so much in other arts invites us more pressingly.

## THE ÆGEAN

Our study of Egyptian and Mesopotamian arts has led us to formulate—quite provisionally and tentatively of course—the idea that under the highly stabilized and organized states the artist finds but little outlet for the expression of his sensibility. Those works of Mesopotamian art wherein we found most sensibility belong to the early period before a single imperial power had laid its heavy hand on the artist. When once the Babylonian and Assyrian Empires are firmly established, the artist is confined to descriptions and decoration, both adapted to propagandist and advertisement purposes, and there is no demand for the free expression of spiritual experiences.

When we turn from these great Empires to the only other culture of the third millennium, that of Crete, we get a very different impression. We know of course infinitely less of the Cretans than of their contemporaries in Egypt and Mesopotamia, if only because we cannot read their inscriptions. We can only guess at their life from the plan of their buildings and the ornamentation of their art-objects. But the vague

general impression which arises from these is of something which we may call, very loosely, more democratic. Such an image as this, of a harvest festival (83), suggests to us a people not altogether unlike the present Neapolitans, leading a turbulent, agitated and vehement life with fishing, trading and piracy as their chief businesses. Certainly there is nothing in Egyptian or Mesopotamian art comparable to this. But even this fragmentary image of Cretan life in the third millennium holds out a tiny warning signal against trusting such impressions too far, for the leader of this rowdy party is said to be an Egyptian: he is certainly playing an Egyptian sistrum. No Egyptian behaved like this on the bas-reliefs of his native country. Was it merely that he did as Crete did when he was abroad or did the Egyptian tradition prevent the artist from ever letting us see this side of life? The argument from the imagery of a time to the life of the time is always subject to great caution, but we can hardly avoid making some picture of Ægean culture and *faute de mieux* this has to be built on the imagery. There are some other indications. The kings no doubt were rich and powerful. They built themselves great rambling, rather incoherent palaces with brightly painted walls, but there is no evidence of their being regarded as altogether apart from the rest of mankind. There is nothing like the royal propaganda by means of monuments that we find under the Empires. Strangely enough, too, the temple does not dominate the architecture of the town. Was their religion, one wonders, one of charms and amulets (a private affair so to speak) instead of one of grandly staged and impressive ceremonial?

With such a people, living a life of free and adventurous initiative, we should expect to find a far less drilled and disciplined art than that of the Empires; we should expect the individual sensibility of the artist to have freer play. And this I think is evidently the case. For one thing, the artist seems to have been left much freer in the choice of his subjects. He painted or modelled whatever interested him, and, in fact, chose to an extraordinary extent the things of daily life—scenes of bull fights, fashionable beauties, and all the different kinds of fish that then as now

in Mediterranean ports gave such variety and interest to their diet. The ecstatic note on which the Italian cries 'Frutta di Mare' seems to echo still from certain Ægean pots and tiles.

We must now consider carefully the relief of the harvest festival (83). It is a most astounding work since it is, for so early an effort, extraordinarily free from the conceptual bias. Though each head is seen in profile there is a vivid sense of the scene as a whole—we get a picture of this crowd of men walking along shouting their festival hymn. Something of their relations in space is suggested. This is based on the actual appearance of the scene; it is not built up by adding one figure after another in the Egyptian narrative style. This sudden outbreak of Impressionism somewhere about 2000 B.C. is rather disconcerting, especially in view of the fact that for the most part Ægean imagery is peculiarly flat. In the remains of fresco for instance, the flowers are conventionalized into geometric and perfectly flat patterns (84). Again, as in the mule of Shub-Ad we have the impression of something accidental, a sudden sporadic inspiration which never got taken up into the regular artistic idiom, the importance of which was perhaps never realized. Certainly there is no evidence of a true Impressionistic style in Cretan art or of any attempt to press further this incursion into the realm of appearance. There is, however, one other relief, that on the Vaphio cup (85), which shows a similar freedom from conceptual frontality. The movement of the heads of these two bulls is perhaps more extraordinary than the similar movement in the Sumerian bull, because it is far more difficult to effect this in a relief than in the round. This involves the whole problem of perspective foreshortening, and though it is not entirely understood here, the general idea of the movement is vividly suggested. We must suppose then that at least here and there Ægean culture threw up artists with a singularly acute power of realizing appearances; but as in the sporadic cases of a similar kind in Mesopotamia the realism of the imagery has an odd air of being accidental, of never having been properly absorbed. The contrast between the extreme naturalism of the bulls and the highly stylistic

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trees strikes a note of incoherence, a note which is often repeated in Ægean art. Indeed nothing could be much more incoherent and chaotic than the piece of pottery (86) with its flying-fish and shells modelled in high relief and realistically coloured and stuck on anyhow and anywhere. Palissy, who some 3000 years later made similar pottery and who, goodness knows, is incoherent enough, never came near this. Its real parallel is to be found in the most degraded products of nineteenth-century industrialism. One has seen things like it in suburban bazaars. Of course, I should be going recklessly beyond the limits I laid down in my first lecture if I were to talk of the bad taste of Ægean art, but there is something so anomalous and so surprising in such works as this, that I must use that convenient short cut in order to call attention to it. For this is not the least like the work of primitive or barbaric people; it is the kind of thing that we meet with in a highly sophisticated and complex civilization where the half-educated classes find a puerile pleasure in the *trompe-l'œil*, in meaningless imitation and superficial similitude. We find such a condition among the parvenus of the Roman Empire and we find it in our own civilizations. From what we have seen we should have thought, *a priori*, that Ægean art, having escaped the vigorous repression under which Egyptian and Mesopotamian art struggled, would give us results comparable to the freer moments of the other arts. But in fact it does not by any means come up to this expectation.

What we imply by sensibility in a work of art is the continual subtle variations upon a rhythmical theme. That rhythmical theme must be so vigorously grasped by the artist that these variations never destroy our sense of the pervasive influence of the dominant theme. Now the Minoan artists had such a flaccid rhythmical feeling, it was so relaxed and so vaguely held by the artist, that the result is often simply vapid and incoherent (87). It is no use leaving the artist's sensibility free play unless that is controlled from within by some deeply felt unifying influence, and that apparently for some reason the Cretan artists lacked. The strange thing is that we get something, the like of which has rarely

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occurred in the history of art, something with which we are familiar chiefly in moments of relaxed control in our own time. Much Minoan art reminds us of that distressing phase of the late nineteenth century which was called in France 'l'art nouveau' and over here 'nouveau art'. And like that it is marked by a lazy invertebrate maundering in which one flaccid curve succeeds another with a desolating incoherence and with no evidence of determined purpose or intelligible control.

## VI

### NEGRO ART

NEGRO art provides us with what is perhaps the severest test of our experimental enquiry, since it affords one of the most striking examples of free sensibility that exists. So deeply rooted in us is the notion that the Negro race is in some fundamental way not only inferior to others but almost subhuman, that it upsets our notion of fitness even to compare their creations with those of a people like the Greeks whom we regard as almost superhuman.

We are so accustomed to the way in which historians light-heartedly assume that artistic excellence is connected with political sagacity and military success, that it requires an effort to remember that we still know far too little about the nature of artistic creation to assume any such correlation of the diverse manifestations of a people. Anyhow we are bound to apply our tests without regard to what the results may imply. We have already seen several examples of Negro art in which we found an extraordinarily intense evocation of the idea of life, a sensibility to vital rhythms.

Even in this figure (88) which is treated with as strict a frontality as the Egyptians employed, which is reduced to simple schematic terms, something of that sense of vital force seems to me to survive as we found it surviving in the extremest simplifications of Scythian animals.

Negro art is extremely paradoxical. It is not in the least what one might have expected. The Negro lives in countries where the forces of nature manifest themselves with devastating intensity, where above all animal life is rich, where life is a continual struggle with dangerous and powerful wild beasts. We should almost certainly expect from this an art in which animal forms would predominate and which would express a powerful fertility-religion with personification of natural forces. And



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none of this happens. Animal forms are few and of little interest. All these creatures which we should expect to haunt and fascinate the Negro's imagination—lions, elephants, rhinoceros, giraffe and snake—are utterly disregarded. We find an art that is excessively limited, limited to sculptures of human beings, chiefly on a small scale. Again a paradox. The Negro wears few clothes, he has a passion unequalled anywhere else for the dance, and his dances show an intense feeling for the plastic dynamism of the human body. We should expect, more than in Greece itself, that the human body would be at least a considerable preoccupation with the artist; and as a matter of fact, though human bodies are often rendered with great plastic feeling, they are disproportionately small and count as little more than a support for the head. It is upon the human head and face that the African sculptor fixes his attention almost exclusively.

And in the head there is certainly no desire to discover beauty like the Greeks did, nor even, I think, erotic charm; nor again, except in a few rare cases, is the aim that of expressing the individual character, the portrait. Negro art aims at expressing one thing only, the vital essence of man, that energy of the inner life which manifests itself in certain forms and rhythms. Negro art is the most purely spiritual art we know of. It is narrowly and exclusively spiritual. It is the expression of an intensely animated religion which conceives of everything as due to the action of spirits. The Negro mind has never conceived the possibility of materialism. And these spirits, under whose capricious sway man has to live, are to a great extent the spirits of the dead ancestors of his tribe. Death releases the spirit which continues to exist in a melancholy and joyless world and there develops a peculiarly irascible and capricious temper. Moreover, its release from life only makes it far more powerful. The business of religion, which is of all absorbing necessity and importance, is to placate and satisfy these spirits by offerings. And these spirits are brought to the anxious worshipper's mind and recommended to his piety by images representing them. I think this may to some extent explain one extraordinary phenomenon in Negro art, namely the

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extreme freedom with which the actual forms of nature are treated. No fact or set of facts about the human face are regarded as peculiarly essential or important. The artist may lay hold of any aspect which he can bend to his purpose; he can take any feature as the motive of his plastic fugue provided it creates in the end this illusion of the spirit's life.

In this Negro head (89) for instance the artist has seized on the dome-like dominance of the forehead, and he has found how to support it by increasing immensely the bulging salience of the eyes and, with slight variations, the prominence of the nose; and against these he has played the straight line of the base of the nose and the terrible horizontal prominence of mouth and teeth. But, as often as not, an African sculptor will suppress the mouth altogether, or reduce it to a slit, and will build on the hollow of the eye-orbit, in exact contradiction to the treatment of this head, which eliminates the orbit almost entirely. There is no convention to govern the choice, scarcely any habitual treatment. But what an astonishing grasp of plastic form this head reveals. The sculptor has somehow got behind the facts of appearance. He understands the language of plastic expression so completely that he can create a living human being without regard to the facts of any existing or even possible human head. He has the same sort of control of expressive elements of plastic form as the musician has of the relations of notes. Much modern sculpture shows a heroic attempt to penetrate to this basic understanding of plastic form, but for the most part it has failed to create anything but more or less interesting decorative arrangements, and until life emerges from them, unmistakably and authentically, as it does so manifestly here, we must judge that they have not found the right clue. Is it perhaps that our European sensibility is still in bondage to those geometrical constants which Greek art imposed? As long as the European sculptor keeps contact with actual appearance his sensibility has a chance to come into play. When, on the contrary, he tries to create as it were *in vacuo*, the geometrical habits of his imagination seem to inhibit him, whereas the Negro sculptor seems at times to attain this complete freedom. Thus in the present instance I think that a modern sculptor,

supposing him ever to have begun to conceive such a strange system of forms, would have shown that he was thinking in terms of spheres and cubes. Whereas merely to say sphere is to misinterpret the subtle complexity and suggestiveness of these prominences and of their interpretations.

But this is all wildly speculative. Let us return to the works themselves.

In the mask (90)<sup>1</sup> you see an utterly different choice of the plastic themes. The mouth is almost suppressed, and the ridge of the nose becomes a support to the almost plant-like exfoliation of the eyes. These are deeply undercut beneath the eyelids, perhaps it is these deep shadows beneath the weight of the prominent lids that gives to the mask its strange melancholy impressiveness. There is no doubt that it creates in us the idea of a human spirit, though one the like of which we have never met. Then again, the hair treated with extraordinary delicacy and precision picks up again the almost vegetable regularity of the features. This chevelure folds like a calyx round the forehead. And here again what delicate sensibility the curvature of the brow shows; how right, we feel, the bold flattening of the cheeks and what a rare discovery is the sharp but delicate salience of the chin, which seems to close and hold this strangely beautiful plastic sequence.

But all African tribes were not alike. Certainly in the Cameroons we find sculptors who did not always create in that rarefied world of plastic abstractions. At times we find individual portraits, but interpreted, and, as it were, recreated, with an astounding feeling for the unity and continuity of its plastic rhythms. Though Negro sculpture is so exclusively concerned with the human spirit it is rarely dramatic in our sense. There is too little reaction to fate, there is always, rather, a profound sense of discouragement and resignation.

In the head of a girl (91) the artist has kept an unusually close contact with appearance. It is an interpretation that might almost have occurred to a European artist, though even here there is an extra-

<sup>1</sup> As the mask of which R. F. was here speaking is unprocurable, a similar example from his own collection has been used as an illustration.

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ordinary freedom in the use of the idiom. There is a vividly vital force in the poise of this girl's upturned head, and how much the effect of this is heightened by the bold flattening of the mask with its features as it were crushed against it, all except the eyes which start out with a sudden accent of shadow. And here to achieve the expressive force of the regard the sculptor has frankly contradicted the actual structure of the orbit and achieved his end by a hollowed plane over the root of the nose. It is a daring deformation, but how successfully it helps to give the intense vitality of the total impression, and how delicately sensitive and yet bold in its simplifications the modelling is.

Figure (92) shows the fetish of a secret society. It is at once the expression and the habitation of a spirit. And again, by means which seem to escape from our comprehension, the miracle of an intense inner life is achieved. The vivid gesture of the hands holding the bowl, the head bowed forward with infinitely patient resignation, and the strange melancholy of the almost unseeing eyes: everything here—even the most surprising distortions—hangs together and co-operates in the realization of the idea. And what intense subtle understanding of form, what delicately unemphatic sensibility there is in the way the eyebrows are just indicated upon the curve of the brow.

This spirit head (93, 94) has the complex, elusive, indefinable quality of the human spirit coloured, as almost always in Negro art, by the sense of suffering and resignation. In regard to this it would clearly be wrong to look upon Negro sculpture as representative of their whole conception of life, as we can the art of the Greeks. A whole side of Negro life, their extraordinary emotional mobility which enables them to pass without a break from moaning to laughter and back again, their vivid sensual enjoyment of things—all this is excluded from sculpture which is almost entirely concerned with religion and mainly with the propitiation of the dead. And as a fearful and anxious resignation to the inevitable spiritual forces which control life is the chief character of that religion, it is inevitably this mood which predominates. The Negro has never conceived of plastic art as a means of enjoying the free exercise

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of the spirit as we do. For that he turns to his real arts, music and the dance. The sculptor himself, though he may be what we should consider a supreme master, is not distinguished by them from the fetishist who by incantation has fixed the abode of a spirit in a shapeless log of wood. The pivot and purpose of the sculptor's work is that it, too, contains a spirit. It is therefore almost an accident, certainly a by-product of the main endeavour, that these works should also evince at times such singular aesthetic power. One cannot but suppose that the Negros are gifted with a quite peculiarly intense and vivid plastic sensibility and this, of course, is fully borne out by the design of their palm-fibre textiles and their household utensils. I spoke before of the astonishing sense of form, the delicate tact and restraint, which the bottle (9) shows. And fortunately the religious purpose of the statuettes did not interfere with the artist's sensibility as was the case when public advertisement and propaganda were the end in view. None the less it did limit their art very severely. Under other conditions such a sensibility as the Negro sculptors show might have produced a great and systematic art, might have become expressive of the whole gamut of human feeling. For certainly one cannot well exaggerate the invention and control of plastic themes which these artists show. You may have seen some modern sculpture slightly resembling the head (95); but if so that is due to the direct and powerful influence of Negro on modern Parisian art. I doubt if in any other school than the Negro an artist of whatever period or country could have imagined this, could have liberated himself so utterly from the facts of the human head, and yet created so vividly expressive, so terribly real and living a being. What an extraordinary leap of the imagination is required to get to this from the familiar known highly conceptualized facts of the face, and by what instinct has the artist guessed that such a compressed synthetic interpretation of a few planes would create this poignant intensity of expression. One feels that somehow the unconscious processes of the Negro mind have penetrated more deeply into the principles which underlie appearance than those of any other people.

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I will conclude by referring you to one more example of those ancestral spirit heads with which we began (96). It is one of unusual suavity of form and a strange melancholy graciousness of bearing. We find in a high degree here the peculiar delicate sensibility of the Negro in the modelling of the brow and the subtle transitions of the cheek and eye-orbits. Here the artist's complete freedom from the conceptual catalogue of features which we expect from primitive arts is more surprising than ever. There are no eyes at all, scarcely more than a suggestion of the nose, no mouth and an impossible diminution of the jaw. But it is, nevertheless, a perfectly coherent and convincing discovery. It is perhaps how a spirit might look, especially one living in that anxious unsatisfied and troubled limbo to which the African imagination consigned the dead. Work like this seems to me to transport us into the remote regions of the spiritual life, which some of the greatest musicians and a very few of the greatest artists alone have explored.

I have spoken hitherto of the art of the great majority of Negro cultures and pointed out how closely bound their art is by biological needs. Our conviction that the propitiation of the dead does not assist us in our struggle to live is of course not to the point. To the African mind, which has never attained the intellectual detachment necessary to conceive a materialistic universe, the only possible means of controlling his destiny lies in such propitiatory rites. To him therefore they appear of the first necessity, and his art is therefore in aim as practical as engineering and applied chemistry is to us.

But on parts of the west coast there existed two states, those of Benin and Dahomey, which attained to a more solid political organization under monarchical rule, and here we do get an art which was not solely religious, a princely and courtly art which expressed a more general and widespread interest in the world. When the Portuguese traders discovered Benin in the seventeenth century, the capital Ibu was a big city surrounded by massive walls, within which there had developed a rich city life—in fact a civilization much nearer to our types than is usual in Africa. The artists of Benin were already able to

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cast in bronze, but they learned improved methods from the Portuguese traders and we are able to date certain Benin bronzes by their realistic statuettes and reliefs of Portuguese men. No doubt their contact with Europeans influenced their art in the direction of a more descriptive realism and a greater interest in decorative motives, but I think already these tendencies were inherent in their art. They were also probably fascinated by the mechanical perfection and finish of European objects, and all these tendencies have made the Benin bronzes (97) far less expressive of the native African sensibility. Benin art shows none of the specific quality of the art we have been considering. It has not the profound understanding of how to relate plastic volumes, nor anything of that strange power to recreate life *ab initio* as it were, by choosing from appearances certain almost abstract plastic themes and building out of them a consistent rhythmical system. Its vision of life remains relatively superficial and external, it has not been assimilated and remoulded in the unconscious. Moreover, Benin art shows a relatively feeble sense of rhythm and it lacks the extreme delicacy and nicety of proportion of the best Negro work. It shows also that preoccupation with craftsmanship, that desire for polish and evenness of surface which is foreign to the true Negro art. And this consideration brings us back to wonder all the more that that complete subservience of most African sculpture to religious ends did not—as I think it generally has done in the history of art—interfere with the expression of the artist's sensibility.

During the Middle Ages there were vague rumours of the existence in this part of Africa of a great empire called Bhil Gana which was supposed to be an eldorado. The name of that coast, Guinea, is in fact said to be a corruption of this name. It is just possible that the monarchies of Benin and Dahomey are the decadent remnants of this great earlier civilization.

In the region of Southern Nigeria Dr Frobenius discovered in the ruins of an ancient city, Ife, a number of terra-cotta heads, of which this (98) is one. I have not been able to find out anything very precise about these except that they are attributed to some period between the fifth

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and tenth centuries. I do not even know whether they are by Negro artists or not, though clearly the types are Negro. But I suspect they are Negro, and we may find a connecting link in that upturned head of a girl. If they are, they would seem to show that in the remoter parts the Negroes had a tradition of sculpture much more akin to our own. But this is not at all like the descriptive art of Benin. It has much of that vital force of true Negro sculpture, though it is expressed without any of those distortions and re-interpretations which distinguish most Negro art. It shows, too, a very delicate and fine sensibility in the modelling of the eye-orbits and the muscles of the mouth. It is tempting to think that this may represent a Negro art not yet dominated by religion, but one which attained to a great sense of style and achieved great plastic harmony.

A strangely disquieting art this of the Negroes, and yet touching heights that few have reached and hinting at much more than has ever been accomplished—for what might not such an acute and rarefied plastic sensibility accomplish if it could be utilized by the wide range of experience, the awareness and intellectual power of a great European artist?

As it is, modern art owes more to the Negroes than to any other tradition, and it is to the credit of artists that they were the first to see its importance, the first to look to it for a clue to that purer, less contingent plastic language of which they have often dreamed. Negro art must, I think, always remain with us; we cannot shake off the hold it has taken on our imaginations, and more than any other art it will prevent our ever returning to that compact, nicely rounded-off theory which could be built by disregarding everything but the Greek tradition. No synthesis will be valid which cannot embrace at once certain masterpieces of the Greeks and such a work as this.

And how many and what formidable problems it suggests, not only as regards the role of the unconscious in artistic creation, but in the whole subject of education. Can we conceive of a possible education which would leave such a sensibility as that shown by these sculptors intact and



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yet achieve the clear logical organization of the Greek mind, or on the other hand is there here some fatal antithesis between these two modes of apprehending the outside world? If the former be possible, we might I think look forward to a purer and more expressive visual art than any that has ever existed in the past, and in any case, if we find how to use it, the contribution of Africa to the spiritual inheritance may turn out to be of the greatest importance as complementary to the preponderantly intellectual spiritual activity of our civilization.

## VII

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IT would require many lectures to give you the barest outline of ancient American art. Fortunately that is not just now our object. What I am trying to do is rather to test our special method of approach to works of art in various different idioms, and from the point of view of sensibility and vitality the two great American civilizations are profoundly significant.

First of all they are distinguished from all other cultures which have achieved any degree of complexity by the fact that they never possessed bronze (or only in minute quantities), still less iron, and that therefore they remained to the end stone age civilizations. This of course gives a peculiar quality to their works of art. Again, in pottery they never discovered the potter's wheel, which was in use in the old world from very early times, and yet their pottery furnishes a number of masterpieces.

Another curious fact is that although the two great centres of civilization, one in Central America, the other in the west of South America, seem to have had scarcely any possibility of intercourse, and although they took very different social and political forms, there is a strong family likeness between their respective arts.

Both Maya and Peruvian architects adopted what we might call a classical style (99, 100), by which I mean simply one in which the horizontal lines are strongly accentuated and in which rectangular plans and rectangular saliences are composed with great emphasis on symmetry and with great simplicity. Besides which, both of them adopted by preference decorations which seem to be influenced by textile patterns. There is indeed a constant tendency to reduce natural

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forms to combinations of the right angle and the half right angle such as almost inevitably occurs if one translates natural forms into textile patterns (101).

Having once achieved this elementary stylization the Indian artist tended to cover surfaces with endless repetitions and combinations of the same forms. You see this clearly enough not only in their hieroglyphic writing but also in their illuminated manuscripts. This seems to indicate a rather indolent industry on the part of Indian artists, as well as a curious indifference to natural forms. Moreover, this tendency to rectangularity at once prevents almost any display of sensibility on the artist's part. A very great deal of the pottery both in Central and South America is decorated in a similar way, producing a certain decorative richness of effect, but with a depressing incoherence and monotony and with no trace of sensibility in the line which repeats rather slackly these predominantly rectilinear forms (102).

Even the sculpture in the round frequently shows the same influence; in this statue (103) not only is there an extreme adherence to the four frontal aspects, but every shape is made as nearly rectangular as possible. Certainly a rather disquieting vitality seems somehow to persist and animate even this extreme reduction of the natural form to its bare rectangular elements.

In these stone masks, of Aztec origin (104, 105), we see the same bias in favour of a rectangular system, but here it has a different effect. In the left-hand mask the geometrical system does no doubt still hamper the artist's full expression of his sensibility—the plastic form of the eye-orbits is scarcely felt and the transition from the planes of the nose to the cheek is made too mechanical. But in the right-hand one we find a most subtle sensibility. We feel here that the geometrical principle merely serves to sustain and control the artist's sensibility, to hold it firm and give it the coherence and dignity of an austere style.

In the finest works of the Maya culture which preceded the Aztec, we find a much more surprising freedom from the rectilinear geometric bias. The head from Copan (106) is dated about A.D. 300, and here we

find a plastic sensibility of the rarest kind. I do not know whether even in the greatest sculpture of Europe one could find anything exactly like this in its equilibrium between system and sensibility, in its power at once to suggest all the complexity of nature and to keep every form within a common unifying principle, i.e. each form taking up and modifying the same theme. The oval is of extraordinary beauty in its subtle variations upon the main idea—you will note how a too exact symmetry is avoided partly by bringing the lock of hair on one side further over the cheek than on the other. Here then we find the expression of a sensibility of a very high order. There is also I think undoubtedly vitality, a powerful suggestion of the inner life—of a strange tension of spirit—of an almost tragic cast. And here at once we touch the dominant characteristic of the Mexican attitude to life. No people were ever more terribly tortured by religious fear. To insure the rotation of the seasons demanded an incredible number of human sacrifices. Wars had to be continually undertaken in order to get victims for sacrifice, but as this did not suffice a quota had to be taken from the people, at least from the slaves and children; and these sacrifices were orgies of sadistic horror, the victim's heart being cut out with a stone knife and the body flayed. Almost all the Mexican gods seem to have been of a peculiarly bloodthirsty nature, demanding perpetual sacrifice and penitential torture, some of which one is glad to think fell to the lot of the priests. Over the stone masks representing the face of a god it was the custom to stretch the skin of a human victim. In this mask (107) the face is represented as already covered by such a human skin, giving symbolically permanent satisfaction to the god's blood lust. And yet what a strangely noble and serene expression emanates from these forms, with their suave and yet austere curves. This, which is of Aztec origin, lacks the exquisite sensibility and plastic freedom of the Copan head. Here again the rectangular bias predominates, but within the limits of that schema there is extraordinary delicacy in the modelling of the planes. In looking at Assyrian art—the content of which, goodness knows, is bloodthirsty enough—we could if we liked find some kind of

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parallelism between the dull heavy-footed precision of their contours and the insensitive modelling of their surfaces, and the relentless cruelty and oppressiveness of their government. But here in Mexico, where every phase of life seems imbued with a religious sadism, we find indeed that while the content of the art, the subjects depicted, are often of revolting cruelty—there is, for example, a relief in the British Museum which represents a priest pulling a cord into which aloe thorns have been knotted through his tongue—we find that the plastic idiom, the quality of the curves, the choice of proportions and so forth arouse in us feelings of an almost contrary kind. As in this mask which imposes on us a feeling of serenity and calm—tinged with melancholy perhaps, but free from all suggestion of shock and horror.

Or look at this marble bowl (108), where no imagery interferes with our interpretation of the spirit controlling the form. We cannot help feeling that the man who did this had not only a delicate sensibility but what we should call extraordinary refinement of feeling, a discretion and restraint which we associate with a high degree of culture of the mind and the feelings. Without trying to explain this strange contrast—perhaps some day psychology may show us the way—it is well to keep these things in mind as danger signals on the road to wide generalizations of the relation of aesthetic to other spiritual activities. Another characteristic which a wide survey of Mexican works of art reveals is the immense range and variety of their imagination, and the strangeness and remoteness of some of their inventions. Again and again this feature reminds us of the fantastic inventiveness of certain periods of Gothic art. And here there is a common psychological background, since, in both cultures, the consciousness of the supernatural predominated so greatly over their consciousness of the natural world; and one wonders whether the tension of spirit produced by this perpetual terror of supernatural forces did have a strangely stimulating effect on their creative power.

Whether or no it was due to this tension of spirit under the sway of fear, there can be no doubt that Mexican sculpture, besides showing a

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special sensibility, did achieve the expression of vitality in a high degree. Indeed one of the most striking examples of vitality was the Mexican dog (23), which seems to indicate an almost mysterious power of entering by an effort of sympathetic imagination into the spirit which animates the form. When they treated human beings this sympathy enabled them to create the most vivid and coherent characters with all the oddity and unexpectedness, the complexity and conflict which go to the make-up of a human spirit. And what extraordinary insight the artist shows in choosing only those elements which were necessary to his idea. In the figure of a man (109) we have all the strange particularity of an individual personality and yet expressed in forms reduced to the barest simplification possible.

In this too (110), how intense and vivid is the suggestion of the inner life, its energy and force and its pathos. Here the pose of the head on the shoulders and the pose of the limbs and the action of the hands are in remarkable concordance with the character and mood expressed by the head. This, however, is rather exceptional—for the most part the Mexican Indians were relatively insensitive to the significance of the figure and very rarely found in it any pretext for plastic beauty. It is indeed extraordinary to find how rarely the human figure has attracted the attention of artists. Even in European art it has only been prominent in proportion as we have been in contact with Greece, which inherited it from Egypt. What makes this so extraordinary is that one would have thought that at least the sexual instinct would have served to attract attention to the figure and that a recognition of its plastic possibilities would have inevitably followed. I think we must suppose that some very strong inhibition was at work.

The stone female figure (111) is as far as I have discovered the nearest approach to the plastic interpretation of the figure, though as you see the artist's interest stops below the breasts, all the rest being quite perfunctory. It evinces the most remarkable grasp of plastic relations with a wonderfully delicate and yet strongly controlled sensibility and prompts one to guess what a magnificent school of sculpture might have

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developed if only the Mexicans had felt the impulse to pursue this line.

The mask of an old man (112) is another strangely impressive work. Again one wonders what exactly impelled the artist to see in some old peasant's face the opportunity for such a curiously vivid plastic scheme. As far as I can tell there is no religious purpose here. It looks like the gratuitous interest in human character which to us seems a peculiarly modern and sophisticated attitude—one thinks of Rembrandt or Degas as the kind of artist sufficiently alert to all aspects of nature to pitch on this. Again it recalls some Gothic heads, and no doubt the mentality of the Gothic sculptor with his inclination to rather broad humour is a closer parallel. On the other hand it is far more subtle and complex not only in its psychological interpretation but in its plastic control than almost anything of Gothic origin. The inspiration in the head of a god (113) is utterly different. We are back again in the atmosphere of Mexican religion with its uninitiated sense of terror, its sadistic satisfactions. But in what moving plastic form the artist has clothed it, and again this serenity and control cannot but surprise us.

From what we have seen of the Mexicans, the wildness and extravagance of their imaginations, their lawless and uncertain thoughts, and the exuberance of their fancy, we should hardly expect them to be capable of controlling a complex unity. We should expect them to wander aimlessly from one detail to another, to crowd their images together with thoughtless industry—and when we come to Hindu art we shall find this tendency arising from a somewhat similar obsession with the spiritual world. But not the least strange thing about Mexican art is just this power of orderly organization, of deliberate control, which we associate with what one may vaguely call classic or rational art (114, 115).

Perhaps we may get the nearest approach to a general idea of Mexican art by supposing a people living almost entirely in a pre-logical condition—a people who responded to everything by a purely emotional and imaginative attitude with no notion of controlling the

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results of their imagination by observation. But we must also suppose, alongside of this overwhelming sense of the spirit world, the incessant preoccupation with placating the inexorable divinities of nature—we must suppose beside this an intensely vivid reaction to sensations of the outer world. All the Spanish writers agree in expressing their wonder at the Mexican passion for flowers and the plumage of birds and for their own magnificent dresses. I think we can thus explain their intense apprehension of character as well as their religious obsession. We must conceive them as reacting violently both to the sensual appeal of external things and to the sadistic obsessions of their inner life, and we must imagine that neither were controlled or mitigated by any intellectual method.

When we turn to Peru we get a rather different and a more sympathetic impression. The story of its conquest by the Spaniards is one of the most hideous chapters in the long list of European aggressions, for they were received by the Inca government with every mark of respect and amity.

The Inca empire which they destroyed had only recently attained to its enormous dimensions. It stretched for more than a thousand miles along the strip between the Andes and the sea, and throughout that vast territory it had established the most successful state socialism the world has ever seen. Agriculture and even hunting was carried out by the people as a whole, working together under the rule of the Inca officials, who were specially trained to a kind of chivalrous devotion to the common good; and the produce was divided apparently with strict regard to the needs of all. So that poverty was unknown and even with their stone-age tools and implements they achieved universal prosperity. This was partly due to their carefully planned systems of irrigation and their vast system of roads. All this was wantonly destroyed by the Spanish conquerors and the country has never fully recovered from the destruction of the system of irrigation, and as there is almost no rainfall vast tracts of once fertile country have reverted to desert.

The Peruvians were, of course, intensely religious and to some



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extent shared the Mexican anxiety about fertility. There seems no doubt that here, too, the due revolutions of the seasons were secured by human sacrifice from very early times, but the practice is said to have been suppressed by the Inca government. Moreover, it never attained the monstrous proportions that we find in Mexico, and certainly their art shows very little trace of their obsessive terror of the spiritual forces of nature. It is much less exclusively religious and suggests to us a people of a kindlier and gentler native disposition. It is often humorous and rarely tragic or portentous.

From the very first in Peruvian art we are impressed by something which, if we may use a very loose and vague phrase, we may call classic taste. We mean I think something which we derive from Greek art, a certain sweet austerity, a strong control of all the elements and a refusal to crowd or overlay the main idea with secondary and subsidiary features. In Greek art we shall see that this goes with a passion for mechanical perfection and geometric precision. In Peru we find, as in the doorway at Tihuanaco (116), something almost uncannily reminiscent of Greek art but with far less insistence on geometric regularity. This may be due to tools. Compare the doorway with a Greek temple. In this wall, too (117), the stones are shaped to fit with absolute exactitude and also held by metal davits, but the surface is not mechanical. It remains an object of sensual contemplation by the subtle variation of planes at the joints, and by the choice of stones of various form and size. The dates are very uncertain; this may be pre-Inca. There is a great rarity of sculpture as compared with Mexico, but there is the same tendency to rounded rectangular forms in what sculpture there is (118) and in the decoration of temples and other buildings. There is also an extreme breadth and simplicity and a choice of proportions which establishes the clearly felt unity in all they do. In the Condor's head from Tihuanaco (119) we feel the same strongly controlled simplification of planes, but with subtle variations of surface and a sense of vitality which animates the rhythm.

Even more in these llamas (120, 121) we find a sense of the inner life

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of the animal, its essential character, which comes through the stylistic system. They seem to me masterly transpositions of natural form into a perfectly understood plastic idea with extraordinary continuity and coherence.

Before such masterpieces as these, it is sad to realize how little has survived the destructive madness of the Spaniards. It is possible that sculpture was relatively rare in Peruvian culture; though it is difficult to think of a people capable of such plastic invention not having produced a great deal.

In default of that we must turn to the pottery, though even of that there is not a great deal. These specimens (122) of the art of the Peruvian Highlands will serve to show that the same classic taste governed the minor arts. You must remember that here, as in Mexico, the wheel was unknown, which makes such work sufficiently surprising from the technical standpoint. This, however, does not properly concern us. We note again the exquisite discretion and restraint, the severe simplicity of the form; and again one thinks of Greece. Only here, too, the curve is far less obviously geometric; it has a subtlety which, in fact, relates it far more to Mohammedan and Chinese examples. Again how exactly felt is the proportion of the border to the whole mass, how right the scale of the floral ornament in which the curves of the stems make a delightful echo of the galb of the pot, and increase the unity of the whole.

We must turn now to the coastal cultures. Here we have no architecture and no stone sculpture. Some very splendid remains of architecture do exist at points along the littoral, but they are the work of the Inca rulers who descended from the Highlands. We must rely then on pottery. And here I must apologize for not showing you, as I meant to have done, an example of the earliest coastal style—the Trujillo pottery. It is peculiarly wanting in any aesthetic quality. The pots themselves are not ill-conceived but the decoration is disorderly and incoherent. It consists of scenes of religious dances, hunting and fighting, in a highly conventional and conceptual idiom, and with no

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more sensibility or subtlety than appears in the typical Mexican illuminated manuscripts. But it seems that at a very early period—we have, by the bye, almost no means of calculating the dates of Peruvian art and we can only note the relative positions of different cultures where they are superimposed on the same site—at a period long before the Inca conquest, the Tihuanaco style seems to have spread its influence over the littoral countries. In the Nazca pots, for instance (123, 124), we find a similar classic purity and austerity of design, a similar refinement in the proportions, and the same ordered control. The galb of the second pot, though the main idea is one of great simplicity, shows the most delicate sensibility in its inflections. And it is fascinating to see with what a sure instinct the painter had seen the opportunity which it gave for a geometrical pattern of the barest simplicity, because at every point the diamond shapes it creates would suffer minute variations from the geometrical norm. In this way he has created a feeling of extreme simplicity and unity, but we cannot summarize it in a geometrical formula, the eye is invited to prolonged contemplation by these perpetual slight variations. No. 125 is equally satisfying in a similar way: there is constant variation on a theme of elementary simplicity and an equally happy, though quite different, choice of the relations of the rectangles to the shape and size of the bowl. Look at the proportions of the band to the upper and lower portions, and the freedom and unity of the whole.

All these are consummate examples of how, by allowing the sensibility to have play—by refusing to repress it in the interests of perfection—we can accept with delight forms of extreme simplicity which would be intolerably bleak and empty if geometrical regularity were attained.

In the Ica pot (126) there seems a want of grasp of the object as a whole, a lack of subordination of the parts and a certain monotony in the ornament. The proportions of the whole pot are fine and firm, but the galb, like the ornament, is monotonous.

Of the remaining examples the first three (127, 128, 129) are comic pots. How essentially characteristic is the absurd solemnity of the parrot

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and how well it gives the life; while the gay little lady who strokes her hair with a coy gesture and whose figure expands into the ample proportions of the pot, shows a humour of a naïve but engaging kind. In this pot (130), of dead men playing pan-pipes, the joke is of a macabre kind, and we cannot help thinking of our own Gothic.

A great deal of Nazca pottery uses natural form freely (131, 132, 133).

Peruvian art does not present us with quite such disquieting paradoxes and contrasts as Mexican. The psychological background appears to be more consistent and more intelligible to us. None the less, I think we must imagine a people reaching extraordinary heights of civilization, solving indeed some of the practical problems which still trouble us, and yet without any developed intellectual culture; a people whose response to life was almost entirely imaginative and emotional, only, for what reason we cannot tell, never becoming obsessed by terror to the almost insane pitch of the Mexicans; but a people that, like the Mexicans, had an extremely vivid response to the sensual qualities of things, and was like them immensely gifted in transmuting them into artistic forms.

I fear you will think that in these lectures I have done little but point to the immense complexity of art-history, to the inadequacy of those generalizations under which it is generally subsumed—and more than that I have shown how much too profound is our ignorance of the nature of artistic creation to enable us as yet to make fruitful generalizations at all. But if along these lines I have been sceptical and discouraging, I hope I may have suggested what fascinating problems of the relations of art to other vital functions of our intellectual and emotional life there are waiting for future solution. But even this has not been the chief end I have had in view. Only very incidentally have these lectures contributed, even if they have at all, to your knowledge of the history of art in its strict sense. Not that I want to depreciate that study. We want every scrap of knowledge we can glean from archaeology, from political and social history and from the study of documents. We want to know all we can about the origins and circumstances of a work of art. But besides

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this knowledge you have to practise an art, the art of looking at works of art with the most sensitive and vivid response possible. And perhaps the most important part of that art consists in the power to maintain your spirit in a condition of tense passivity, a state of passive receptiveness in which you are alert to its appeal, ready to vibrate in harmony with it.

This is a faculty which nearly everyone possesses in some degree, but which can be increased almost indefinitely by constant exercise and training. The aim I have had in view has been to suggest to you possible methods of such a training of aesthetic apprehension.

# VIII

## CHINESE ART

### EARLY CHINESE: YIN AND CHOU PERIODS

THE picture of the earliest civilization on earth which is gradually becoming clear to us shows us that it covered a triangular area in the middle east. We have Mohenjo Daro in the Indus valley as the eastern extremity, and Anau in Turkestan in the north, and Egypt and Mesopotamia to the west, with a somewhat later offshoot in Crete and the Ægean. This civilization, which grew up somewhere about 5000 B.C., lasted until somewhere about 1000 B.C., though persisting longer in Egypt and Mesopotamia. Of course it was not a single uniform civilization: there were very distinct varieties in different parts, but there was considerable similarity in the main characteristics and there was some intermittent intercommunication. Around 1000 B.C. this central block of civilized tradition spread in two directions; to the west, where it recrystallized in the Greek and Mediterranean civilization to which our own belongs, and to the east, where it formed the other great pole of the civilized world in China. Meanwhile the central triangle became relatively uncivilized, so that except on very rare occasions there was scarcely any intercommunication between the two poles. In these two new centres civilization developed almost independently. Perhaps we are to-day witnessing the process of the joining up of these two poles into a single world-wide system—indeed this may be the great hope of the future.

Now these two great centres of civilization, although they developed in the main independently, show one great similarity which is of prime

importance. Both have attained to a rationalist conception of the world. In both, logical deductions are more or less widely accepted as valid. Man is, of course, always so largely determined by instinctive and inhibitional motives, that reason is only apprehended by a relatively small minority; but even this is sufficient to give a peculiar colour to the civilizations in which it occurs—a colour which distinguishes European and Chinese civilizations sharply from Hindu and Mohammedan cultures or those of pre-Columbian America and Africa. Everyone who has met educated Chinese must, I think, have been surprised to find how unexpectedly easy the interchange of ideas is, how similar is the general intellectual pattern. And although China has never developed a scientific tradition as we have, there is nothing inimical to the scientific attitude in the Chinese way of apprehending external reality.

We need not be surprised then that Chinese literature, so far as we can get at it through translations, and Chinese art offer relatively few obstacles to our apprehension. I should like to begin by emphasizing this fundamental similarity. Of course, our European civilization has not been consistently tinged with rationalism; we have had our periods of unreason. But in other ages, such as the centuries of Greco-Roman civilization and Renaissance and post-Renaissance Europe, it has been distinctly rationalist and curiously enough (it may be a mere accident or it may not) during those ages our architecture has been mainly what we call classic. I don't want to go into the meaning of this word. I use it merely as a conventional label for a particular type of architecture in which the main elements of structure are not too much overlaid or obscured—and are given with sufficient simplicity to enable us to relate the parts easily—an architecture in which rectilinear forms predominate. It is true that Chinese wooden pavilions with their great protruding and upturned roofs do strike us as odd, fantastic and exotic, and indeed these forms have so seized on the European imagination that they have become symbols of the Chinese style. None the less, if you will look at photographs of the ordinary countryside, at farmhouses,

bridges, gateways and so on, they are so familiar that one might suppose them to be in Italy or the South of France. For the most part the architecture of the great periods of Chinese art has been destroyed in the course of her terribly catastrophic history, but if we look at the few ancient buildings that are left, such as this (134), we feel at once that it belongs to our classic tradition. Though the cornices are carried out further than Italian architects would have done, we instantly understand the main idea and accept without difficulty the choice of proportions.

This pagoda (135) is of course rather strange, but chiefly because we have no similar structures, for the pagoda is not a tower but an elongated stupa, which was a dome put to cover relics or mark a holy spot. I find it, however, quite easily acceptable in the proportion and salience of these decorative ridges. And at all events the base of this pagoda is pure Renaissance in style. These octagonal pilasters and the panels between them might almost have been designed by Vasari or some mid-sixteenth-century Italian.

I wanted from the first to posit this classic element in Chinese art because to a large extent the popular notion of Chinese art has been derived from exceptional periods—periods when the Chinese are enjoying a rococo digression from the classic idea, just as Europe did in the eighteenth century. None the less, early Chinese art is in some respects exceptional and that in a way which is of peculiar interest to our enquiry.

Throughout my previous lectures—perhaps the reminder is superfluous—we have used as a clue the question of sensibility. We have continually asked ourselves, Does this work of art express the artist's sensibility fully or has that sensibility been repressed in view of some other considerations such as conformity to a mathematical or geometric system? It has gradually become clear from these questions that in all works of art there is apparent a certain conflict between the desire to establish a vigorous and evident order, frequently of a geometrical kind, and the expression of the artist's instinctive and unconscious reactions to



form. Thus in Egypt we saw evidence of a peculiarly acute and delicate sensibility, but this sensibility was so vigorously controlled by a traditional formal scheme that it only manifested itself at rare intervals and in isolated works. In Mesopotamia we found that sensibility was less rigidly controlled in the earlier periods, but we found the art hardening under the Semitic empires into a peculiarly dead and insensitive official tradition, everything being subordinated, in fact, to the practical needs of political propaganda and prestige. We found in Ægean art a very free and little controlled sensibility, but of a kind that lacked any profound or distinctive feeling. When we come to the Greeks we shall find a situation not unlike that of Egypt—sensibility under a rather rigid control; only we shall see that that control arises from quite different causes.

But in early Chinese art we shall find the balance between geometric regularity and sensibility is of an almost unique kind. I think we may say that at no period in Chinese art has sensibility been completely repressed. The notion of the organization of form and of its perfection has never with them implied—as it so often has elsewhere—the suppression of sensibility. We saw in the case of Egypt, Babylon and Assyria that the existence of a powerful imperial government, with its desire to use art as propaganda and to enhance its prestige by the erection of imposing monuments on a grand scale, worked for the suppression of the artist's sensibility; and that it was only in rare individual works of art or under the anti-imperialist policy of Akhenaten that the powerful Egyptian sensibility was able to manifest itself.<sup>1</sup> But even the powerful Han Dynasty, though it tended in the same direction, did not suppress sensibility to anything like the same extent.

<sup>1</sup> We can see in modern Italy a curious parallel instance of this tendency. Mussolini uses with great effect the prestige value of art for the glorification of the Fascist regime—indeed he regards it as being of such importance that in spite of the financial stress of the time, vast sums are spent on erecting colossal public buildings, post-offices and railway-stations. The railway-station at Milan is of stupendous proportions. And in many of these works the crushing effects of great masses and hard unmodulated surfaces is used to impress and over-awe the beholder.

This is a very curious fact. It is difficult to find any external causes which could account for it, and I think we must suppose that the Chinese are peculiarly gifted in this direction. Not only is the artist unusually concerned to allow a free play to his sensibility, but the public is unusually ready to read and appreciate its implications. This delight in the intimate and subconscious expression of the artist's feeling is clearly seen in the Chinese attitude to the art of writing. The script itself, more or less regularly geometric in its earlier forms, was developed in accordance with this feeling into a formula which satisfied at once the Chinese desire for clearly marked formal relations and the need to express feeling by a free rhythmic movement.

Chinese writing combines something of the architectural firmness of the Greek and Roman script with the freedom of the Arabic. In Arabic the sensibility is less controlled; the rhythmic phrase flows unchecked and scarcely builds organized units—it is unarticulated. The attitude of the Chinese to the art of writing is highly significant. From relatively early times fine specimens of writing have been admired and revered almost as much as the greatest masterpieces of painting—indeed, scarcely any distinction is felt between the two arts. Even to-day houses are decorated with long strips of paper on which a text is inscribed in large decorative letters, where we should certainly use pictures or decorative designs.

We shall, of course, find when we come to study the art of Europe that the sensitive handling of the artist plays a large part. But not only is this suppressed when an appeal is made to an inartistic public, but among the artists themselves there arises from time to time a reaction against the expression of sensibility—a positive desire to achieve mechanical regularity.

As far as I know, this has rarely happened in China—but on the other hand the admiration of sensibility has frequently gone to absurd lengths. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, for example, a school of learned amateur painters developed the cult of the brush stroke, regarded as the supreme expression of sensibility. With en-

thusiastic snobbism a whole set of rules came to be accepted which only the élite could master. If you were painting a willow tree in spring, your brush stroke must recall such or such an old master; if the same tree in autumn, your handling must contain allusions to such or such another old master, and so on. In short, we have to admit that Chinese artists have at times been guilty of Chinoiserie (136), and these are the abuses of their extraordinary susceptibility to the aesthetic charms of sensibility.

In Japan, which borrowed incessantly from China, this tendency was pushed even further. It comes to a climax in those specimens of pottery where a pot thrown with perfect accomplishment and skill was afterwards—while the clay was still wet—battered about so as to imitate the effect of a primitive unskilful but sensitive craftsman.

I only cite these curious aberrations of taste, which belong to much later periods than we shall deal with in these lectures, as evidence of that constant tendency in Chinese art to exalt the expression of sensibility to an extent which Western artists very rarely have done. In the periods which we shall deal with now there is no trace of these exaggerations.

As in Mesopotamia, Egypt and India, early civilization centred round the fertile river valleys, but not in the lower courses where vast lakes and marshes spread from between the two rivers and made of the Shantung massif a kind of island. These marshes, moreover, were the home of wild barbarian tribes. The mountain ranges were still covered with forest, haunted also by barbarian tribes. But along the upper river valleys innumerable feudal lordships were established. Originally these were small and isolated, but about the period from 800 to 300 B.C., which we call the Chou Dynasty, they gradually fused into about ten larger states between which there went on a perpetual struggle for pre-eminence. And all the time the barbarian menace had to be met. But more and more, the confederation of the major states took shape under the pressure of the strong feeling for a common culture, a common ritual and a common idea of an organized and civilized way of life, so

that there came into being a Chinese confederation of feudal states. What we call the Chou Dynasty then was not really a dynasty such as arose when China became a single political entity, but merely a confederation of states in which the Chou lords held a predominant position. This was later seized by the Ch'in feudal family, and it was one of these, Ch'in Shih Huang Ti, who, about 256 B.C., conquered all the other states and gave to China a uniform system of government. He established intercommunication by roads and canals, built the Great Wall, and pushed the frontiers of his empire beyond even the limits of the empire of later times. He was perhaps the greatest statesman that China ever produced.

Such, then, is the social and political background which we must imagine for the Chou period, the earliest definitely historical period. It was for these feudal lords that the bronze workers produced the great sacrificial vessels which are almost the only surviving works of art of this long period wherein the Chinese aesthetic ideal takes its first distinctive shape, or almost the first, for of recent years excavations in Honan and Kansu have brought to light a quantity of pots which belong to a pre-bronze civilization, i.e. one emerging from the late stone age—the eneolithic age. In almost all parts of that great West Asian block of early culture, the eneolithic period is marked by the production of painted pottery of surprising technical accomplishment (137, 138). These early men seem to have mastered the craft almost immediately. Mostly, as for instance in the Susa pottery which we studied previously, the technical skill is far more evident than the aesthetic purpose. But in these Chinese pots we seem to be confronted with men of great aesthetic feeling. There is, however, a great difference between the pure curves on these early pots and the rounded rectangles characteristic of later Chinese art.

It may seem easy to suppose people gradually changing from one type of curve to another, but this is not like the development of early designs. Moreover, this true spiral had a very wide extension outside China, so that it is almost impossible not to associate the pots rather

with some culture spreading from South-West Russia to China than with true Chinese.

All the same, skeletons show a race very near to the Chinese—certainly Mongolian. We may perhaps suppose an early Chinese race practising an art and culture, coming from the Central Asian block. If we suppose that for some reason this culture came to an end and the people relapsed into relative barbarism and that later they developed their own peculiar indigenous culture, represented by the Chou bronzes, we get at least a possible explanation. And there is one fact which supports such a view: the existence of these tripods (139). They are of peculiar form which is found nowhere else but in China. And the form is not a natural potter's invention; it is purely practical—a woman's idea to get her water to boil quickly. But this form became one of the types of sacrificial vessels of the Chou period (140). We may suppose then that during that period of barbarism the people went on making these rough tripod cooking pots though they had lost all memory of their beautiful painted ware, and that when culture returned in the bronze age this shape became one of the type forms for sacred vessels. This Chou tripod is probably a very early example of that Chinese bronze art. It shows what is very characteristic, the representation of monstrous and generally terrifying animal forms, particularly dragons. I think they must be supposed to have had magic power. Here the artist has used his monsters most ingeniously to give coherence and unity to this very unpromising form: note the three heads biting the supports, the six horns filling the bowl. There is great beauty in the proportions. It is a typical Chou Dynasty work, but in point of fact we can carry back this art behind the Chou Dynasty. At An Yang in Honan there have been found a number of objects of bone, tortoise-shell, ivory and bronze. Now An Yang was the last capital of the Yin Dynasty and was destroyed when that came to an end in 1100 B.C. These bones were used for oracles—they were cracked by heat and the cracks interpreted as omens. Although the inscribed characters are very different from those of later times they can still be deciphered to

some extent. This throws back the beginnings of this civilization because it must take a long time to elaborate a true script from pictographs. We can hardly doubt that it went back to 2000 B.C., which accords with the tradition of Chinese historians.

Already we find peculiar interpretation of all forms in terms of rounded rectangles. As far as I know it occurs nowhere but in China and in early American art (cf. 99). (For I have no doubt that American art owes its form to some connection with North Asia.) But what on earth happened to this form in all the centuries from 1100 B.C. to A.D. 200? for we have no evidence of similar works of the intervening time.

But we must turn from these fragmentary specimens of Yin art to the works which are generally attributed to the Chou time. This early Chinese civilization, even if it were not first brought into being by the introduction of bronze, is deeply impressed by the value and importance of bronze. Bronze had for it an almost religious significance, and bronze vessels were cast and dedicated to record important events. Thus the inscription on one bronze vessel runs to the effect that it was dedicated by a certain lord to his suzerain to record the gift by him of a certain fief. Again, we read of the existence of nine bronze cauldrons which were regarded as palladia—as guaranteeing the security of the state. By some mischance these were all lost in the river Sse in the sixth century B.C. Later on when Shih Huang Ti had established his empire he determined to recover these bronzes to consecrate, and, as it were, legitimize his newly-won power. After a prolonged search one was seen at the bottom of the river, whereupon he ordered his officials to proceed with the recovery of the cauldron; but just as it reached the surface a dragon rose from the water and bit the rope in two and the cauldron sank again. In a Han slab of three or four centuries later (141) the scene is recorded in the peculiar humorous style of that period.

This by the way—I merely want to emphasize the sacredness of these bronze vessels. It is further proved by an ancient custom. These bronzes like all perfect things, like nature itself, had to embody the male and female principles, and thus in the case of casting vessels of special

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importance the bronze founder and his wife were expected to throw themselves into the molten metal. Later on, some practical genius made an important discovery. He found that the spirit of the furnace is itself a male spirit; it was therefore only necessary to throw in the wife in order to produce the true harmony—thus effecting a notable economy.

Nearly all the works of art of the Chou Dynasty that we have are ritual bronzes. We have a few pots it is true, but these are of rough workmanship and for the most part purely utilitarian. The bronzes all belonged to a series of fixed types, which were used each for some special purpose in the religious ritual. One kind held wine, another corn, and so forth.

I must say a little about the religion with which the feudal lords of the Chou state were so deeply preoccupied, because it has a profound influence on Chinese art. Like so many early religions it was a fertility cult. Like all primitive people the Chinese were obsessed with the fear that the due sequence of the seasons might break down. It required all the power of magic to ward off this danger. The key to the whole system of nature lay in the fact of the two principles of Yin and Yang, the female and male, and it was by sacrifices to the male principle of heaven that the priest-king established harmony between it and the female earth, which thereby became able to bring forth its fruits. This sexual polarity pervaded the whole of nature as we have seen in the sacred bronzes, and it entailed the most vigorous regulation of sexual relations, the coming together of the sexes being of too great importance to the whole scheme of nature to be allowed except at appropriate times—particularly during the spring festival, which was celebrated with ritually ordered dances with an erotic significance.

Though the heaven and the earth were the seats of the two great principles or spirits, there were besides innumerable minor spirits; hardly any object but might be the seat of some daemonic power. So far the Chinese agrees with many animistic religions, but what distinguishes it from almost all the others is the strange fact that they never gave a distinct personality to the spirits of nature. Nor was any outward

form of animal or man found in which to embody even the presiding spirit of heaven to which they sacrificed. It remained an abstraction, one of the governing principles of the universe. This complete absence of anthropomorphism is very remarkable and is perhaps the chief reason why the human figure plays so small a part in Chinese art, which scarcely ever became interested in the nude human body. When men appear in early Chinese art they appear in their everyday social appearance. They are not the vehicle for ideal conceptions as elsewhere.

Indeed, until Buddhism came in from abroad, no figure of a divine being seems to have been conceived. The nearest thing to an idol which the Chinese could place on their altars was a holy saucepan, for the sacred bronzes are only glorified household utensils.

And this again is profoundly characteristic of the Chinese conception of the universe. Since all depends on the harmony between the Yin and the Yang, and since it is through the family that these are regulated, the family becomes the central religious fact. Even to-day the individual is a more intimate part of his family, less capable of independent life, than anywhere else. And if the individual is sacrificed to the family, so to a great extent is the state which never could claim the same kind of allegiance as the family.

Thus the Chou bronzes, these sanctified cooking pots, become a fitting symbol for the peculiar Chinese religious attitude. And one must admit that the Chinese bronze workers responded to this religious appeal and were able to invest these simple objects with a kind of religious impressiveness.

In the altar stand (142) you have a set of these bronze vessels of various kinds, upon the elaborately ornamented bronze stand on which they stood on the altar.

Here is one of the commonest of all types, the Yu (143). It is, you see, essentially a cooking pot with lid and handle, a practical pot with handle across the narrow side. But it is a pot elaborated into the strangest form because it is covered with sculptures representing animals



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of magic power or symbolic meaning. There is the monster head in the handle end. The handle itself is covered with stylized dragons reduced almost to a rectangle with a diagonal. The ridged projections at either side are stylized birds. Beak, body, wings, feet, and dragons range round the rim in two rows.

These outstanding flanges and projections give to the pot a suggestion of terrific force, an almost menacing quality. It has a feeling that we should call barbaric in the rugged aggressiveness of its jagged projections, if it were not that we see also the evidence of conscious taste in the placing of these plastic accents: the discretion of the ribbed band, the repetition of the sagging curves at base of the bowl—and the swept line of the lid and beaks repeating the arm of the base. The design shows a craftsman not merely occupied by the demands of ritual symbolism and magic power, but feeling the need to combine them into a single formal unity. There is no doubt about the strength of the impulse to organic control; nor about the sensibility of the expression, for there is a remarkable absence of mechanical regularity in spite of rigid stylization.

Now we will pass to a Yu which is almost the complete antithesis to our first example (144). Here is a perfect example of what I call the classic quality of Chinese art, its clear and articulate statement of the main relations. Here the magic symbolism is reduced to almost abstract geometric patterns in three narrow bands, except for the two beasts' heads which still form the handle ends and one slightly protuberant t'ao t'ieh monster head in the centre. And having reduced the representation to mere patterns, the artist has concentrated all his powers on the plastic harmony of the whole form. He has produced a masterpiece of design in which every proportion surprises us by its perfect fitness. Note the adequacy of base and suggestion of stability heightened by slight protrusion; the simplicity of the voluminous bowl; the nice placing of the ornamental band where the handle joins; the beauty of the flattened curve which comes to a close in the sharper rounding of top reversed curve; and the beauty of the flat answering dome of the

lid and handle inverting the theme of the base. We no longer feel inclined to talk of barbarism—rather of a naïve sensibility heightened by conscious aesthetic purpose.

But we see that if the controlling intelligence which insists on the clear statement of all the main relations is strong, it does not aim at that mechanical uniformity which we noticed in Egyptian and Greco-Roman examples. The curves for all their simplicity of outline never approximate to curves for which we imagine a simple mathematical statement; they avoid anything like segments of a circle. In the second place, all the ornamentation avoids everywhere either ruled straight lines or exact repetitions. The artist's sensibility plays over every detail. There is no uniformity; every part remains in the realm of sensuous contemplation: we cannot serve it up in a formula.

Every detail is felt in relation to the whole; thus the handle, which is rectangular in section in some Yus, in others is modelled to a curve which corresponds with and answers all the other curves of the bowl itself.

In regard to these bronzes and the Chinese's intense regard for them we must bear in mind a distinguishing trait of the Chinese character, namely the extraordinary pitch to which they have cultivated their sensual aptitudes, both as regards sight and touch and the combination of these. Thus they apprehend the material quality of substances with a quite peculiar emotional exaltation. They ransacked nature to discover substances capable of arousing this passion. And very early they discovered in jade an almost ideal substance. The finest jades are cut rather in order to bring out the material quality than as the medium for a work of art, and often the forms are of extreme simplicity. And the purely sensuous quality of jade has at all times provoked a kind of lyrical ecstasy in the cultured Chinese. In this distinctive characteristic the Chinese have really managed to retain and develop a feeling which is almost universal in children. We can all remember the excitement of finding on the sea-shore special pebbles which satisfied profoundly both our sense of touch and sight. Of course all artists retain something of

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this sensual passion of childhood, but with most people it tends to atrophy: with the Chinese it seems to be consistent and widespread.

Certainly they managed to give to some of these Chou bronzes a material significance which has rarely been surpassed. Many of them have by now gained an adventitious beauty in which their makers would have rejoiced, for they have taken on a marvellous patina—sometimes, as here, it consists in a bubbling of the surface into nodules of dull reds, greens and green blues, which owing to the happy chances of chemistry create a delightful colour harmony.

Now the Chou period covers, you will remember, a great many centuries and these bronzes are of very different periods. We have as yet no external means of dating them, or even arranging them in a chronological sequence. There are two opposed views: one that that first bronze with its barbaric aggressiveness is very early, and the second the result of a long process of heightened culture and sophistication. The other, precisely the opposite; that the early art is simple and that the first pot is the expression of a kind of baroque exuberance and exaggeration.

The question has a certain interest for its bearing on our aesthetic notions. When we look at works of art a part of our pleasure comes from the feeling of getting into intimate touch with the creative spirit of the artist. One would like to make sure that in looking at a work of art one could read with some security the general mentality of the artist's period. At least one would hope to distinguish between a primitive and what is usually called (absurdly enough as a rule) a decadent art, between passionate determination struggling with difficulties and the exuberance of virtuosity which has already tired of simplicity.

Another, the owl Yu (145), is similar to the first. Now my own feeling is that this, like the first Yu we saw, is essentially primitive; that the artist is bent on giving to his imagery its utmost expressive force. This is really built up of two birds, probably owls standing back to back, though endless dragon-like forms fill up every available space. We have the same beaks protruding on the lid, the same four flanges dividing the design, only they are already less pronounced.

It seems to me that this Yu (146) decides the question in favour of my view. It is, you see, intermediate between our first and second examples. The handle has taken on a broader diameter, which is aesthetic and non-practical. The decorations are also intermediate, reduced to two bands but still not quite geometric. The two ears are perfectly explicable as vestiges, but inconceivable as originating thus and then growing into great flanges representing birds. The t'ao t'ieh represents the other two flanges.

Though, if I am right, this belongs to a less highly developed art than Mr Eumorfopoulos's Yu, it is the work of a very conscious artist. The proportions are heavier, less elegant, but there is a marvellous consistency in them in relation to the flatter less curved galb. The flat top to the lid knob is in some ways a better termination to the plastic sequences than the round knob of the Yu from the Eumorfopoulos collection (144).

If one studies a number of these bronzes one is astonished to find how the very slightest variations are sufficient to give rise to quite distinct and definite ideas. I know hardly any that are merely repetitive, merely school pieces; each one seems to be an original discovery by an artist intensely conscious of his aesthetic predilections and seeking to achieve complete realization of an idea. Sometimes the absence of a break and reverse in the curve of the lid produces a quite new effect—that of a continuous galb containing the whole design; and the decoration picks up the idea of continuous flattened curvature, avoiding angles and strong relief, which gives a peculiar unity to the whole volume.

Others are extraordinarily primitive in form and the crocheted flanges suggest architectural supports like gothic buttresses. Indeed, one can hardly doubt the intention to suggest a building of which the lid becomes the roof. This gives an extraordinarily impressive and weighty construction, eminently evocative of this early Chou culture, already capable of refinement of aesthetic feeling but still of a terrifying ferocity. And indeed history contains few such records of wholesale massacre and torture as marked the internecine struggle of the Chou feudal lords—

who were in constant contact with completely barbarian tribes and no doubt used their superior intelligence to improve on the customs of barbarian warfare. They were by no means a gentle people, and yet they had their off-times in which they could appreciate beauty and delicacy of feeling. After all, Confucius was the product of the later Chou civilization, and though they did not practise his conception of justice and moderation they revered and respected them as ideals.

In one Yu (145) you could see the remains of two owls back to back. The ram vase (147) is one in which the two beasts retain their natural forms as far as the forequarters go. It is a triumph of plastic design which gives us the feeling of the immense compressed energy of these people, of the latent power behind all their work. And this is possible because this artist is much too genuine an artist to underline his effects. There is no particular emphasis in these rams' heads; they are only simplified and stylized so as to harmonize with the forms of the vase. He saw, too, that these forms needed the short stubby legs to express the idea of support. And what a suggestion of vital force comes from the upward sweep of the galb, which gets its impetus as it were from the downthrust of the feet. The jar itself becomes a kind of living beast.

The Kuang (148) is a quite distinct type, a ritual wine-jug, which must have had tremendous magic power by its profusion of animal forms. The jug itself is made of a monster with ram's horns. The handle is a bird, but serpents with dragon heads, tigers, elephants, even fishes, find their place. There is a tendency to build up animals with other animals. There is a certain lack of style and childlike emphasis on the monster, and a casual profusion of fancy everywhere.

A close look at the lid shows how nearly realistic these artists sometimes become; for example, the tiger and still more the fish—the elephant is less understood. It is probably an early horse, though I think it would be wrong to suppose that there is any fixed principle about realism. It used to be thought that realism always tended to precede conventions and no doubt many geometrical patterns grow out of the incessant copying of animal forms, but in many cases artists are quite

capable of reverting from patterning to realism. Certainly in Chou art we find movements in either direction.

No. 149 is another variant of the wine-jug, and interesting because human forms are so rare in Chou art. It represents a tiger eating a man, or as some of the learned Chinese maintain, a hero who was suckled by a tiger. I can't help thinking that even a hero would prefer that the process of suckling by a tiger did not involve having one's head chewed as a preliminary.

The wine-jug with the flat horns (150) is another variant, but on quite different lines a remarkable harmony is achieved. The body of the jug is rectangular, and its ribbed flanging gives an idea of strained support which leads up to, and is dominated by, the monster's head. This would be too insignificant to merit such an elaborate base if the artist had not had the happy idea of crowning him with these immense flat horns, so that in spite of the slightly comic stylization of the face the way he carries his horns is sufficiently impressive.

But these monster wine jugs, though they are interesting for their forcible character, pose for the artist too difficult a problem for him to achieve the highest beauty. For that we must turn to forms more related to pottery.

The bowl from the Eumorfopoulos collection (151) is one of the finest specimens of another type, the Kuei—this I should take to be early. It is covered with ornament, but there is such choice of quantities that there is no suggestion of crowding or confusion. It supports the general shape of the vessel.

It may interest you to know the inscription which is engraved on this piece.

'It was the 3rd month when the King gave command to Ai Fa the Secretary of the Interior and said, Marquis of Hsing, in grateful recognition of services rendered we confer on our subjects the 3 kinds of—The people of the territory, the people of the cultivated lands, and the people of the cities made obeisance to the son of Heaven of Lu. Brigands yielding to his beneficent power hastened away and are gone. God

above for ever orders the holders of the Empire of Chou to pay honour to their departed sire. And We on our part shall not venture to let lapse our beneficent covenant with our Minister the Son of Heaven. Wherefore is recorded our Royal command to make a sacrificial vessel to the Duke of Chou.’<sup>1</sup>

This two-handled bowl (152) is, I take it, a much later, more sophisticated version of Kuei type. The design has become purely formal and geometric, but again what choice and invention it shows. It is an entirely new conception but carried out with the same consistency and niceness of judgment. Look at the suggestion of force and power given by this raised relief and yet with a new feeling for elegance. Here is a splendid example in which everything shows an exquisite sensibility. The plastic idea is entirely distinct and is supported throughout. We feel the rightness of this tall simple base to support the flattened spread of the bowl whose forms suggest its capaciousness, and with what a subtly inflected curve this bulging belly leads back to the neck which stops just in time not to contradict that idea of the squat spreading bowl. We can follow with delight every detail here, nothing is merely there by the way. How well chosen is the scale of the diamond shapes on the bowl, almost the only ornament that catches the eye, though in between there is a network of delicately incised lei or thunder patterns. The ridges were reduced, but the idea of massive strength they give is found again in the rounded knobs.

These bronzes well illustrate the peculiar aesthetic quality of Chou art: the rigorous co-ordination of the parts in a single unity and the full sensibility of the handling. It is this tense equilibrium between sensibility and controlling intelligence which is so fascinating to us. I find the essentials of plastic harmony in almost their purest most elemental expression in these bronzes. The imposed condition of making a vessel is so slight that the plastic imagination of the artist is left almost entirely free.

<sup>1</sup> For a better translation of this difficult inscription see W. P. Yetts' *Catalogue of the Eumorfopoulos Collection Bronzes*, vol. 1, p. 27.

This four-legged bowl, with winged dragons straining upwards to support the bowl, and an austere rectangularity counterbalancing the exuberance of the decoration, is magnificent (153).

This tall Yu (154) shows great elegance and sophistication, but there is no magic left.

We will pass now to some bronzes in which animal forms play a greater rôle. The owl jar (155) is typical of the Chou and shows their power to reduce all the forms to a highly conventional style—see how the wings become spiral patterns—and yet retain the essential character of life of the animal. How happily he has seized on the flattened orbits of the eyes. How vital and energetic a movement he has given his bird, not I think without a certain mischievous humour.

The elephant does not become a wine-jar as readily as the owl, and there are some examples which seem crude and childish efforts, or perhaps even consciously humorous, as for instance one jar with a baby elephant on the lid. But one cannot pretend that the artist has made much attempt to interpret his animal in terms of a vessel; things have been allowed to come pretty much as they would. It has only the charm of the quaintness and naïveté of a childish fancy. In what I take to be a later work, however (156), we have both a better pot and a much more real elephant, in spite of the liberties the artist has taken with nature. Except in those very primitive examples where the trunk grows out into a bird's head, the Chou artists generally refused to allow the elephant his normal length of trunk—they judged perhaps rightly that it was inconsistent with Confucian moderation. From the point of view of design the elephant is all the better for this abbreviation, and again the pot demanded the fullest volume for the body, and they shortened in consequence the supporting legs. For all that, the animal is conceived with such a continuous and consistent movement that he becomes very real and alive. He convinces us that if an elephant refuses to be like this some other animal ought to be.

In the water buffalo (157) a similar licence is taken with the actual forms of nature, but how tensely alive it is. How well it suggests the



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slow ponderous dull-witted aggressiveness of the bovines. This attains a very high level of plastic imagination, with its large clear formulation of the essential structure and the rhythmic unity of the movement. But the peculiar interpretative power of the Chou artists is most clearly seen in the grasshoppers (158). I know no other people who could carry forms to such a pitch of stylistic generalization and abstraction and yet keep their animals alive. For the most part conventionalized natural forms become dead decorative formulae, but these insects are intensely alive. The secret no doubt lies in an intuitive sense of what characters must be retained and amplified and what can be left out. It lies too in the refusal to give mechanical precision even to the most Euclidian abstractions. Look at these antennae, which almost seem to vibrate: though they are conceived as rectangular abstractions the actual line and surface is everywhere tremulously sensitive. It is this peculiar tension between controlling intelligence which establishes unified structural design, and of the free vital rhythms which belong to our unconscious gestures which gives to Chou art its almost mysterious evocative power.

### CH'IN AND HAN WITH A DIGRESSION ON SCYTHIAN ART

During the fourth century B.C. the Ch'in dukedom, which had remained somewhat separate from the central Chinese federation, developed to a high degree its military power, and round about 300 it began to supplant the Chou lords as the predominant power. It was at about this time that the Chou style, which had been becoming progressively more and more sophisticated and refined, underwent a sufficiently marked change to entitle us to speak of a new style. This we call Ch'in<sup>1</sup>, because it begins with the Ch'in political power, but it began before the foundation of the Ch'in empire by the great leader and administrator Shih Huang Ti in the third century and probably continued into the period

<sup>1</sup> It is now generally called Third Phase, or Han Valley style.

of Han domination. The names of styles, Chou, Ch'in, Han, must be taken therefore merely as convenient labels and not as giving us precise correspondence with the political rulers. The change from the Chou to the Ch'in style is perfectly intelligible and logical if we accept the order which I suggested last time for the Chou bronzes (cf. An Yang pot), but it would mean a complete break if we supposed the simpler Chou forms to have preceded those flanged and buttressed structures.

The Ch'in jar with four feet (159) is a typical Ch'in bronze. You see how all trace of those aggressive jutting and jagged flanges has disappeared—there is no vestige even left. All is rounded into a beautiful continuous contour. Ornament is flattened; it becomes an evenly enriched surface made up of convolutions of the flattened spiral; the figure at the top is realistic, and the sculpture is no longer part of the object but superimposed. The Ch'in hare (160) is very like the late Chou elephant. It is, however, more purely decorative—the patterning is smaller, more linear, more elegant. It suggests a further stage in sophistication and self-consciousness.

Thirty-six knobs are a ritual necessity for bells—otherwise we feel that this artist would have suppressed them (161). There is no longer that desire to emphasize the armoured strength and resistance of the material. The harshness of the Chou forms is mitigated everywhere and in consequence these artists tend to revert to true spiral forms. We may almost call the Ch'in a rococo version of Chou, for it already seems to hint at forms familiar to us in eighteenth-century Chinese art. It has lost the gravity and resistant force of the Chou forms. In the Ch'in mirror (162), a typical product, we again get a prophecy of later forms. The dragons with their flowing unbroken curves are already almost like the Han. You may think that the dragon (163) contradicts what I have said. He is certainly sufficiently flanged and jagged, but the projections are thin—they have nothing of the weighty, grim power of the Chou. They are the expressions rather of a self-conscious exuberant fancy playing with the idea of the animal's ferocity and elaborating it with a kind of rhetorical insistence. Again we see the

prophecy of much later developments of that peculiar humorous exuberance of Chinese fancy. In the Ch'in jar (164) the Chou patterns become frankly rococo in feeling, and the exfoliation at the top implies a complete release from the structural austerity of Chou.

We saw in the first Ch'in jar that while the surface decoration had become purely ornamental and unrepresentational—no hint is left of dragons and t'ao t'ieh—the beast on the lid was more realistic than ever. We may therefore accept this bear (165) as expressive of Ch'in art or of the transition to Han. It is, I think, one of the most masterly pieces of animal sculpture that I know. Here we have an intimate intuitive understanding of animal life, a marvellous grasp of the essential character expressed in forms of the utmost simplicity so that the plastic sequence is instantly grasped. What makes this so remarkable is the degree to which the observation of nature has been pushed without ever becoming merely descriptive and external. Everything has been assimilated and as it were digested into terms of an inevitable and coherent plastic harmony. Nothing in the natural object has been accepted as merely given; all has passed through the transmuting power of a creative mind. In short, there is neither mere likeness and illusion nor any *a priori* schema. Though the relation of the planes to each other is made perfectly legible, that apparent simplicity has nothing abstract about it, the artist's sensibility has been alert to feel those incessant variations and modulations of surface which give to the form its full volume and substance.

Here then we have the qualities of sensibility and vitality highly developed and yet kept under the control of an organizing intelligence.

But if the Ch'in artists occasionally rose to such heights of plastic power as this, the main tendency was away from plastic and towards the development of flat surface decoration. And in this vase (166) we have a new technique adapted to this purpose, namely niello. The bronze is cut away behind the figures and gold inlaid into it. It produces a surface decoration of the utmost splendour. Clearly we have left the magic motive of the early bronzes; this is an art of luxury made to

gratify the taste of rich individuals. There is already here a tendency to sacrifice sensibility to surface finish. Whereas you can go over every square millimetre of a Chou bronze and never find any exact repetition, here the craftsman replaces the artist and shows his technical dexterity by the exactness with which the ornamental units are repeated.

But in between the bands of ornament we have the beginnings of a pictorial style. This shows more skill in the sharp precision of the contours than feeling for design—which is rather chaotic—or for the character. It, too, is rather a piece of brilliant craftsmanship than great art.

The inlaid bronze jar (167) leads us directly to the art of the Han Dynasty. This bronze is called Han but much of Ch'in is left, for example in the meander pattern. But the figures are definitely Han—the imagery of the Han period is quite distinct in character. Perhaps through being relieved from the anxieties and terrors of that fierce feudal period of the Chou, the peculiar Chinese sense of fun breaks out in fantastic fairy stories and myths. These active little gnome-like figures begin to dance and gesticulate across the scene and the birds at the base are, I think, intentionally comic.

That the Han was a period of rapidly increasing wealth and security we gather from the fact that art is no longer mainly devoted to religious ritual; the private individual can now indulge his tastes and command the artist's services. And so we find in Han times an extraordinary wealth of objects for personal use and adornment, magnificent fittings for chariots and harness, mirrors in immense quantities, fibulae, belt buckles, inlaid foot-rules, candelabra and what not. And with this new luxury we do get even more than in that late Ch'in vase the luxury effect, i.e. the rich patron is more concerned with the technical perfection, the nice workmanship and polish of his possessions, than with their artistic quality. It must be evident at a glance from the care and patience that has been expended on their surface perfection that they are costly objects—so that the mere possession of them constitutes a title to gentility. It is an inevitable result of this attitude that the artist's

sensibility must be more or less sacrificed in this final process or polishing and rubbing down. Besides, since mechanical perfection is the crown of craftsmanship, sensibility is inevitably suppressed. And so in the Han period we do get works of art which lack sensibility in spite of the general tendency of the Chinese to appreciate that quality.

The first impression of many vases of this period is how much they must have cost. They are in bronze with minute patterns inlaid in gold; the inlaid spirals are precisely similar, everything is as hard, bright and exact as rule of line can make it. They are pieces worthy of Bond Street or the Rue de la Paix.

In this mirror again (168) the perfection of machine-made quality is evident. All the forms are repeated as exactly as possible, the nervous vital quality of handling natural to the artist has been drilled into submission to the idea of perfection. But of course all Han pieces do not suffer so much from the deadening effect of this desire for perfection. The supreme technical skill of the Han workers is sometimes at the service of an artist; the general design and proportions are beautifully felt, and the linear engraved patterns, though they have nothing of the vital energy of the Chou nor the fantasy of the Ch'in, are still exquisitely adapted to their function of enriching the surface without interrupting the main idea of form.

The pottery vase with painted designs (169) shows a favourite Han technique. The pattern is boldly and firmly drawn but does not strike us as either monotonous or mechanical, so well is it adapted to the forms of the vase itself. The galb has neither the subtle inflections nor the continuity of the Chou forms. It is distinguished rather by the sharpness and clearness of its articulations—foot support, bowl, neck-tip. This reminds us of Greek ideas of design where clear articulation of the different parts was so evident. And the galb itself, though it does not attain to the perfect geometric regularity of Greek pottery, approximates far more to simple geometric curves than the Chou vases ever did. Look at the Greek pot (6) for comparison; you will see that there are great differences, but the Han pot is far more like the Greek than is the Chou.

The restraint of sensibility in the Han style and its approximation to geometric constants undoubtedly did bring about an aesthetic not altogether unlike that of Greece—and this is no fancy of mine, for the likeness has struck so many writers on Chinese art that an attempt has been made to establish some direct influence from Greece or Rome at this time. But there is no evidence for this and no serious authority now accepts it. The likeness is due to similar social conditions coinciding with a similar stage in the evolution of art—a similar control of technical means.

If we decide, as I think we must, that the apparent likenesses to Greek art which we find in Han designs is fortuitous and that no direct contacts can be discerned, the case is quite different with another foreign art whose influence on China in Han times cannot be disputed. This foreign art generally goes by the name of Scythian, but this name is unfortunate, for although it was practised by the Scythians it was not confined to them but spread all across the Central Asian steppes; the art of the Steppes would really be a better name. It was a very peculiar art. As it was practised by peoples who were generally nomadic, it was inevitably confined to small and portable objects, mainly to adornments for the horses and the person. These objects were to a large extent of gold in the western areas and bronze in the east. And those ornaments, which were sewn on to or fixed to the harness, were generally in the form of plaques. On these plaques the nomad artists modelled reliefs the motives of which were almost exclusively taken from animal forms, so that this art is often spoken of as the animal style. To the west these nomad tribes were mainly Iranian, connected with the Persians; to the east they were Mongols. But living as they did the same kind of nomad life and probably intermingling to some extent, they all practised a very similar style.

We know very little about these nomad people who had neither letters nor history and who did not require permanent buildings, nor in fact monuments of any kind. Of all these Asiatic nomads we know most about the Scythians because of their contact with the Greeks. The Scythians were, as I say, an Iranian nomadic tribe who had pressed

down from Central Asia upon the borders of the Assyrian Empire in the early sixth century B.C., and they settled in the fertile Kuban valley north of the Caucasus, spreading later on all round the shores of the Black Sea and even over a large part of the rich agricultural land of South Russia.

But this region, especially the Kuban valley, had been a long time before the seat of some kind of civilization. Probably it formed an outlying part of the great system of civilization which flourished from the Nile valley to the Indus and northwards to Turkestan in the fourth and third millennia B.C. We know practically nothing about the people who carried on this civilization somewhere about 3000 B.C., but they have left in the tombs of their chieftains certain very remarkable works of art. Perhaps the finest of these are the vases and figures found in a royal tomb at Maikop (170-172). There is considerable likeness between these vases and the Sumerian Enteumena vase (75). Only that here there is much less stylization; the animals are not grouped heraldically and are much more naturalistic. Their disposition over the vase is similar to certain very early Egyptian engraved stones. But the animals represented belong to a more northern region—in particular there is a drawing of Przevalski's horse (170), which now survives in Mongolia—but most of them have spread further west. So that these objects presumably belong to the district where they were found, and were not imported from the great centres of Mesopotamia or Egypt. And they show a high degree of skill in the metal work, and, I think, an even stronger feeling for vital rhythms than the early Mesopotamian. This profound feeling for animal forms comes out even more in the bulls made of gold (171, 172). Here although the pose is symmetrical and shows the four frontal aspects, the modelling is not in any way limited by that; the plastic movements are equally free in all directions and the planes are distinguished with a fine comprehension of plastic rhythms. And this gives to the figures that breadth and simplicity, that effect of purpose and style, which was so curiously lacking in the rare cases of naturalistic animal forms from Sumeria.

There is a gap of more than 2000 years between these works and that of the Scythian invaders, and of course it may be a mere coincidence that at such a long interval this country was again the site of a culture specially distinguished by its extraordinary feeling for animal forms and a peculiar control of vital rhythms. On the other hand it is possible that in both cases a related nomad stock found its way from Central Asia into the rich Kuban valley and settled there. Of the Scythians we know a good deal from Herodotus and other Greek writers, for they were in close contact with the Greek settlers on the northern and eastern shores of the Black Sea. The Scythians in this particular district had settled down to some extent, living, presumably, as a ruling caste on the agricultural inhabitants whom they had conquered. With the conservatism of nomad peoples they maintained customs which had died out long before in the great civilizations. Thus on the death of a chieftain his wives, his attendants and his horses were slaughtered in order to provide for him in the other world. Herodotus's picture of the prince's tomb surrounded by impaled horses each mounted by an impaled rider gives us a grim enough notion of their manners, and Herodotus's account is fully confirmed by the graves, in one of which the skeletons of 360 horses were found.

Such a people was not likely to be in a position to undertake large constructive works of architecture or sculpture. Their art was a private art consisting mainly of personal adornments which they could carry about with them. Thus they developed a technique of thin metal ornaments which could be sewn on to their clothes. Sculpture in the round is comparatively rare. The greater part of these ornaments were in gold brought from the Ural and Altai mountains. Indeed no people ever seems to have possessed such a superfluity of gold as the Scythians, unless it be the Peruvians. And this fact is particularly unfortunate, since much the greatest part of the works of Scythian art was melted down during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries by the Russian settlers who dug them up. It was only the personal intervention of Peter the Great that saved a certain proportion, and after his death the work of destruction went on until recent times.



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But unlike palaeolithic man the Scythian artist is not prevented by this obsession by animal forms from adopting a definitely aesthetic attitude to them. The assimilation of the forms is complete. They are fully interpreted and transmuted into strictly plastic terms. There is no merely imitative realism. I have never seen a Scythian work which I should definitely call a bad or false work of art. They may be rough and clumsy, show signs of haste or incompetence; they never fail of a certain aesthetic purpose. There is nothing comparable to that complete suppression of aesthetic impulse of which we have seen so many evidences in the arts of the great civilizations.

And when, as in this bronze top to a pole (173), the work shows complete technical control the result is certainly very surprising. Such a work as this is rare in the history of art. Very few people have ever had so profound a feeling for vital rhythms that they could reduce all the complexity of the forms of a living being to so severely simplified a statement. Why, one asks, does this animal persist in being alive when all its forms have been so ruthlessly schematized? In arts like those of Egypt and Greece where geometric constants prevail, such schematic treatment of natural forms seems to inhibit the idea of life. Look for a moment at the Greek lion (19). It is a very fine thing in its way, for the forms are expressed with decision and vigour, and it sums up very acute observations of the natural form. It is a much fuller description of a lion's head than the pole top was of a deer's—but has it not somehow missed the inner life? The Greek artist has used the natural form, first for its decorative enrichment which is got by introducing a certain mechanical regularity into the accessories of mane and wrinkles, and secondly he has used it as a kind of abstract formula for the idea of ferocity. It is not regarded as existing in and for itself.

Whereas in the polehead, though the schematization is pushed further, it is carried out along quite other lines. It respects the essential character; there is no attempt to read human feeling into it. It keeps its own vague mysterious animal life. There is no accent in its regard, but what animal alertness is given by the accented perpendicular of the ears!

Or take again these deer (174), which come from the other extreme of the Steppe territory, from the tribe of the Ordos who lived just outside the north-west bend of the Great Wall, the tribe through which Chinese art received the Scythian influence. They may even be by a Chinese artist, but if so one deeply influenced by Steppe art. Again we find the intimate and profound intuitive feeling for animal life. Here there is much more study of the actual forms of the animal, the structure of the body is perfectly understood and stated with extreme concision and simplicity but also with such a delicate sensibility that we never feel the emptiness of a deliberate and conscious schematization. It retains the fullness and unexpectedness of nature. The Siberian mirror (175) gives another rendering of deer-like forms; this time they are reindeer, and the mirror comes from the Siberian border of Mongolia, somewhere near the Altai Mountains. I suspect that the idea of a bronze mirror must come from Chinese influence, but the art is distinctly nomadic. What a marvellous power of concentrated expression these elementary lines reveal! Without knowing much about reindeer, I confess I cannot resist the feeling that the essential quality of the beast, just what gives it its specific character, is here realized in a kind of inspired caricature. Something in the poise of the head and neck—subtly varied in each of these figures, by the bye—something in the exact proportions of the body and the way it finds its support, give me this intimate feeling that one touches just what is most characteristic, just what distinguishes this from other animals. Even the difference of bearing of the calf seems suggested, and yet hardly any facts are described. This drawing in spite of its abbreviation is not to my mind the least like the conceptual drawing of children and some early arts. It seems to be distilled from the visual experience directly, and never apprehended as a sum of conceptual symbols.

It is scarcely too fanciful to think that in a region like Siberia life had gone on almost unchanged since the days of the first palaeolithic hunters, and that the tradition of their eidetic imagery had never been completely destroyed during the neolithic phase, and so was able to

blossom out again in this rarefied and purified form—only that now the artist possessed what palaeolithic man so conspicuously lacked, the feeling for a coherent system of harmonic relations and a knowledge of how to achieve its complete realization.

These animals (176) also come from the Altai Mountains. They are carved in wood and show the same characteristics. The complete freedom of movement in the lower animal is very remarkable and reinforces the idea that vision has hardly been interfered with at all by conceptual habits. The panther (177) is a piece from the Crimea which is said to be of the seventh to sixth century B.C., i.e. about the beginning of the Scythian settlement on the Black Sea. Here there is scarcely any influence of frontality and the character of the panther-like creature is achieved by the very slightest accents. It is in cast bronze covered with gold leaf and originally had a coloured enamel decoration on the body. This must be one of the earliest examples of this enamel technique. It persisted throughout the Scythian culture and was inherited from them by the Sarmatians. Sarmatian enamelled ornaments were carried up through Russia and became the models, both in design and technique, for all the tribes of North Europe, spreading thence to Merovingian France and Anglo-Saxon England, so that the art of these Asiatic nomads has had an extraordinarily widespread influence during a very long period. Look now at the bronze horse-trappings (178). These figures are typical of a great many Scythian objects and they show a strong likeness to the bronze objects which have recently been dug up in Luristan in the mountains of South-West Persia bordering on Mesopotamia. These objects are believed to be the work of the Kassites, an Elamite tribe which at one period in the second millennium conquered Babylonia. They are supposed to date somewhere between 1000 and 500 B.C., and it is now suggested that in them we find the first germs of the animal style of the Steppes. (Note: the heads coming out of body. It is a much more purely decorative art; with no great feeling for actual animals.) This art of Luristan effects a great many contacts; it shows influences of Sumerian art, of later Assyrian and even Achae-

menid art, and finally provides a possible link with the art of the Steppes. More and more we are forced to see that the district north of Persia and India was the greatest and most frequented highway of the ancient world, in contrast to what has happened in the last millennium during which it became a mysterious *terra incognita*. The line of the trans-Siberian railway, almost the last great trans-continental railway to be constructed, was by far the greatest line of communication for the earliest civilizations of mankind.

This Chinese sword hilt of the Han period (179) immediately proclaims its likeness to the confronted animals of Luristan and the Scythian harness trappings. I do not for a moment suppose that there was any direct intercommunication between Luristan and China. The likenesses must be due to the mediation of the Steppe artists.

In the gold stag (180) there is another contact of Scythian art, namely with Greece. This comes from the Black Sea region about the fourth century B.C., a time when the Greeks had established trading stations in Scythian territory and were in close contact with the Scythian overlords. It is a typical Scythian animal, some kind of a stag, and has been rather mechanically and unintelligently copied from a Scythian original by a Greek craftsman, who has subsequently added these animals on the body of the stag. This is quite in the manner of the animal style, and some of his animals are copies of other Scythian models. But the griffin is a Greek variant not of a Scythian, but of an Achaemenid type. So we have the strangest confusion of styles all on one object. What I want you to note is the striking difference between the descriptive realism of the Greek artists and the intuitive vitalism of the Steppe artists. We shall perhaps have occasion to return to this in discussing Greek art.

This lead plaque from Persia (181) shows the Scythian style at its extreme. In particular it shows the mania for animals leading the artist to find animal forms everywhere, so that the ass's hoofs become bird's heads while a row of asses' heads grows out of his back to make the necessary support for the ornament.

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We have seen a tendency to this nightmarish fancy in the Luristan bronzes and still more in some of the Chou ornamentation, where an elephant's trunk becomes a bird's head and the feet of a monster become a dragon serpent, showing how free was the circulation of artistic material all across Central Asia. It has even been suggested that Chou art or rather Yin art was the real point of origin of the animal style, and there may perhaps have been several starting-points, the nomads of the Steppes acting as a clearing house between them.

The bronze torque from Siberia (182) is free from the fantastic extravagances of the last example, and shows the Scythian artist's extraordinary power of deriving a richly decorative design from animal forms and that not by enlarging upon the details of mane and claws as the Greek artists did, but by the decisive divisions of the planes, by emphasis on the fundamentals of the plastic form. But of course the life of the animal is more or less sacrificed here to the decorative purpose. But in the bear (183) we see how completely realistic these artists could be, and yet retain the quality of great style. The realism is not descriptive, it is fundamental and proceeds as it were from within, so that the plastic harmony, the satisfaction which we get from following the relations of the planes to each other, seems to come inevitably out of the inner nature of the beasts. This bear probably comes from the Ordos region and is perhaps no distant relation to the Ch'in bear (165). These two ornaments (28, 29) are also probably from the Ordos and actually came from China. The one on the left (28), a buckle, shows how the idea of animal life had so penetrated the imagination of these artists that they could endow the simplest abstractions with life. The forms here are restricted to a few vaguely circular forms, and yet the idea of the two confronted beasts looking out at one is irresistible. And in the other example (29) (a thin bronze plaque meant to be sewn on to a garment) there is hardly anything left except just the curious indifferent and unresponsive life of this feeble little newborn creature.

In the two ornaments 184 and 185 I have brought together closely similar examples of nomad art. The lower one is typical of Western art,

probably Russian. We see here a tendency to reinforce the decorative quality by rather tight divisions of a linear rather than a plastic nature; whereas the upper, eastern version is more freely plastic, less defined and precise and may by comparison be called impressionist. This one may even be of Chinese origin, for although it remains distinctively Steppe art it has definitely Chinese characteristics.

This plaque, however (186), is quite definitely of Chinese origin and workmanship. The firmness of the framework and the choice of proportions between it and the figures is Chinese. Here indeed we see the Scythian style treated with the fully developed aesthetic consciousness and deliberate purposeful choice of civilized artists. The pattern made by the two animals is worked out so as to give us a clear feeling of its unity. See how the bent-back body of the stag, which is wonderful also in its grasp of the movement, balances the curved back of the feline; how all the rhythms flow into one another and build up a continuous harmony; with what ingenuity, what an appearance of happy accident the metal supports are obtained. This is barbarian or primitive art which has been refined and harmonized by a highly civilized intelligence. We see from this that of the two great organized and civilized arts which had contacts with the Scythians, the Greek and the Chinese, it was only the Chinese which could understand and profit by the naïve but magnificent inspirations of the nomad metal workers.

Which brings me back to my main thesis about Chinese art, that it alone of the early arts could achieve intelligible purpose in the main relations—could establish a logical unity—without sacrificing sensibility or vitality. In this support (187) we get a further stage in the assimilation of Scythian motives to the Chinese idiom. The object, whatever its purpose may have been, has the solid construction of a Chinese work. The form is splendidly adapted to emphasize the architectural idea of strong support, and the figure has great vitality and even naturalness: but the play of the interspaces with solids is clearly derived from Scythian models. This Scythian art, then, brings into the general current of Han art an influence which often counteracts the tendency to

mechanical perfection and exactitude, and indeed Han art is very various.

I give a few more examples of sculpture (188-192). In the pillar at Fung Huang's tomb (189) you will notice the classic style that has already appeared in the pagoda (135).

The little statuette (190) is not simply a dog made to look comic; in it the sculptor has made the comic element reveal the essential character of the dog.

The elephant jar (191), in the inconsequence and inaptness of its design, is worthy of the extravagances of Cretan or Victorian art. It is curious for such a period and shows again the variety of Han art.

As we see, the Han artists were always tending to replace plastic relief by linear design and flat decoration, and the Han period marks the real beginning of the Chinese art of painting. It is true that we have scarcely any actual paintings left. But we have a special type of stone relief which gives us some idea of what it was. The worship of ancestors imposed on the Chinese the necessity of fitting out the dead with all the paraphernalia of life, and as they had lived in rooms with painted walls the inside of the tomb also should have been painted, only as painting would perish too soon in the damp of the sepulchre the paintings were translated into relief, or rather silhouettes outlined in stone. This example (193) depicts an attempt on the life of Shih Huang Ti. Fu hsi and his sister Nü Kua are shown with set squares and compass, as the founders of civilization. The background is chipped away very slightly—enough to make it grey against the black of the polished slab. There seems to be perfect ease of representation, and no signs of difficulty or struggle, such as we find in early European painting. The artist has a perfect sense of the significance of gesture which produces the intensely dramatic effect of the top scene and makes the whole incident extraordinarily vivid. The perspective is very slight and the sense of intervals so sure that the total effect of pattern impresses us at once.

These reliefs supply us with a vast store of folk-lore, popular my-

thology and fairy story, celebrated historical scenes and above all of moral tales. The love of moral tales is almost a national vice. Modern Chinese criminals spend their amusement time drawing illustrations to moral tales—pictures divided into two halves, one showing what happens when you obey the moral law, the other when you break it.

The attitude of the Han artist, then, is primarily illustration (as with early Italians), but as with them the artist is not slow to see what chances it gives him for design, and although they vary very much in quality the more one looks at the rubbings of these reliefs the more one is astonished at the pictorial understanding they display.

In the *Cavalcade* (194) perspective space is wonderfully suggested, and the rhythmic flow suggests rapid movement marvellously. Note the subtlety of the wheel and tree impinging on the border; the placing of inscriptions and trees; the gestures of the riders, the charioteer, and the great lord.

This painting of two heads (195) will show you that some of these Han draughtsmen were great artists. It would be hard to find anything to parallel this in European design. The simplicity of the contour and its power of suggesting volume reminds one of Giotto—it has the kind of grandeur of that early art but on the other hand the primitives had no such power of suggesting free movement. We have to wait for men like Donatello or Leonardo da Vinci before we get such easy command of complicated gesture. And then the intensity of regard of these eyes, the complexity of the psychological expression of these two heads and the dramatic power of their interaction—for all this we almost have to think of Rembrandt. I do not think I am being extravagant. It is difficult to praise too highly the extraordinary expressive force which this artist's simple lines exert, or the sheer understanding and grasp of form that is displayed in the drawing of the heads.

In the painted brick (196) look at the suave movement of the two ladies, the vivid effect of the tilted head, and the extreme economy and potency of the line. See what an effect is produced by the fluttering hands of the surprised lady on the right; here is genre painting at its



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finest, with a vividness of accent, a particularization and an immediacy which in the West was only achieved in post-Renaissance times. Few of the many losses which the troubled history of China have imposed on us equal that of the destruction of the great masterpieces of Han painting.

### BUDDHIST ART: WEI AND T'ANG

In the last lecture we saw that Scythian art brought certain new elements into the Chinese tradition, but that these were so nearly akin to pre-existing Chinese art that they did not effect a very striking change. It was very different with the next great invasion from Central Asia, because this brought with it a new religion, namely Buddhism.

I am generally rather sceptical about the influence of religion on art—at least I think it is often assumed to exert a more direct influence on the actual forms used by the artist than it does—but in this case of Buddhism in China there is no doubt of the importance of the change. It forced upon the Chinese a problem which was quite foreign to their way of thinking, because it made them face for the first time the problem of an idealized type of humanity.

As we saw, the Han artists represented human beings in the situations of ordinary life. Their pictures were essentially genre pictures, their attitude to the figure was essentially like that of modern painters. They noted the individual character, and by their instinctive feeling for movement, were able to suggest the psychological reaction to the situation. The effect of Buddhism, with its insistence on a single idealized type of human being and the expression of a particular kind of feeling, was to make Chinese art much less modern. Under Buddhism, Chinese art became something which we should call medieval.

There is a curious parallelism between the Eastern and Western worlds at this juncture. Both for Christianity and for Buddhism Greco-Roman art supplied the first iconographic types, and to some extent the Greco-Roman tradition was modified in a similar way. The chief

difference is that the catastrophe of the fall of the Roman Empire was far greater and more lasting than the Tartar invasion which brought Buddhism to China. China managed to assimilate its barbarian invaders more quickly and more completely than Rome could. There is nothing in Chinese art corresponding to the long period of the Dark Ages, and thus Chinese 'gothic' comes more or less straight out of Hellenistic Greek art. But this change did not take place in China itself. The home of Greco-Buddhist art was in the regions of North-Western India, Eastern Afghanistan and Bactria. In this region the successors of Alexander the Great had imposed Greek culture on the inhabitants and it was here that Buddhist iconography first took shape. Apollo became Buddha in Bactria in almost exactly the same way as he became the Good Shepherd in Rome, though the Hellenistic models in the East were certainly a good deal better than the feeble Roman visions which were all that the early Christian artists had to work upon.

The Greco-Buddhist relief (197) is strikingly like an early Christian sarcophagus. There is the same high relief, the same crowding of the figures with little feeling for design, the same general effect; though the individual figures are more delicately and sensitively handled, and in particular the drapery falls in more rhythmical folds and lacks the heavy rounded loops of early Christian work.

The bust from Hadda (198) is one of the many stucco figures discovered at the great Buddhist centre of Hadda in Afghanistan, and we see an almost pure Hellenistic type; only there is something new, not in the actual forms but in the feeling, as given both by the expression of the features and the poise of the head.

There at once you get what the East nearly always felt, and what Greco-Roman art lacked, that instinctive feeling for the animating spirit which gives coherence and meaning to movement. You get, too, a new tenderness in the expression which makes one think of early Gothic sculpture of Chartres and Reims, although the form is essentially Greek.

The three heads in the upper row (199–201) show some more Hadda types. The one to the left (199) might almost be from a French thirteenth-century Christ, and shows how immediately this new spiritual conception of Buddhism found its ‘Gothic’ formula, whereas it took about 1000 years for Christianity to get to this point in the West. The central head (200) shows already the beginning of the peculiarly Buddhist conception of the spirit withdrawn into itself in a mood of intense contemplative abstraction. Note, too, the long ears due to the wearing of heavy ear-rings which became everywhere a fixed character of Buddha. The right-hand head (201) is a vividly realistic portrait of an Oriental—I suppose an Afghan type. It is certainly not Mongolian.

Of the two remaining heads that to the right (203) is almost a pure Hellenistic portrait head of a philosopher, which here does duty for an attendant on Buddha; but again with that slight change in the direction of a greater psychological expressiveness. The other (202) shows already a slight modification of the Greek physiognomy in an Oriental, I think a Mongolian, direction. But how much it still keeps of the elegance, the physical beauty, of the Greek notion of humanity.

The coloured stucco figures (204, 205) come from one of the oases of Turkestan, and therefore make a longish stage in the journey of Greco-Buddhist art towards China—and, as you see, they show a much further departure from Hellenistic originals. The left-hand figure (204) with its painted moustache is distinctly Iranian or Persian in influence, for this phase of Central Asiatic art receives many influences from without. Bactria itself was conquered more than once by Sassanian kings and they brought with them an art which likewise sprang from Greco-Roman origins but which they had already modified greatly, so that we get another stream of Greco-Roman influence changed in a specific manner by its sojourn in Persia. Yet another influence comes through by way of India. It, too, derives from the Hellenistic centre in the north-west of India, but it was modified in a quite different direction by the Indian genius. And all these three currents mix in Turkestan and are fused and modified by its Mongolian and Turkish inhabitants, as well

as receiving even stronger and stranger Chinese influences as they move eastwards. In these regions, too, there was an extraordinary mixture of races—Sogdians, Tokharians, Uigur Turks—and even a mixture of religions, Nestorian Christians and flourishing settlements of Manichaeans as well as Buddhists. The Manichaeans, who were mainly Persian, are peculiarly interesting because their strange founder, Mani, united with an extreme asceticism a passion for miniature painting and calligraphy which he transmitted to his followers, who thus developed a peculiar Manichaean art which had great influence on the later developments of Persian art as well as contributing to the compound art of Central Asia.

It would take me many lectures to unravel all the strands of this complicated structure, and it would not repay us to do so because, although this strange compound has its own peculiar beauty, it scarcely produced anything of the highest aesthetic quality. Only I want you to picture to yourselves vaguely the situation in Turkestan in the early centuries of our era. There is something thrilling to the imagination in the fact that all the spiritual, aesthetic and cultural ideas of the ancient world thus fixed a rendezvous together in the oases of this remote desert region; above all perhaps in the fact that Greek culture lived on so long in Central Asia, that when in 630 Hsüan Tsang, the Chinese Buddhist, made his great journey from China to India through these regions, the various kingdoms through which he passed carried on Hellenistic culture and manners but little changed from those of Alexander's immediate successors.

Almost all the art of this region is found in the huge Buddhist monasteries, many of them fortified, which are dotted along the route to China. Beside the monasteries there are temples hollowed out of the rocky walls of river-beds containing innumerable Buddhist shrines. The painted stucco figures surrounding the figure of Buddha in these shrines, in spite of some delicacy of detail, are curiously casual and naïve in arrangement.

Of much greater interest are those numerous caves in which the walls were covered with frescoes. The best of these, which were discovered by

Grünwedel and Le Coq, have been detached from the walls and are now admirably displayed in the Berlin museum. The general aspect of such a cave chapel, with its rather chaotic profusion of imagery in which Buddhas previous to Sakyamuni are represented in endless repetition, is rather monotonous. This (206) is a wall filled with illustrations of the Jataka stories of previous incarnations of Buddha. It is designed like a wall-paper with big repeats made by these conventionalized mountain shapes—wells, springs, streams, flowers and trees (curiously like the Byzantine formula), very realistic birds, and a man shooting an elephant, the elephant being one of the incarnations of Sakyamuni. But what is most curious in this rather unfamiliar imagery is that at the base runs a frieze of hippocampi derived from Hellenistic originals. There is decorative feeling, and an admirably consistent disposition of accents of tone and colour.

That rich decorative invention and feeling for balance and unity of effect is well seen in this series of saintly Buddhist monks (207). These bold zigzag patterns, at once very simple and producing an effect of richness, are curiously near to the Byzantine style. But of course this imagery loses most of its value for want of the colour. The colour-schemes of these Turkestan painters are very remarkable, unlike anything else we know. The harmonies are very cool and fresh, depending largely on grey blues, deep puce, sulphur yellows and pure pale emerald greens with some strong reds and roses used rather sparingly and with great discretion and always interspersed with a great deal of white. It is what we should call a very modern harmony. Perhaps some of Matisse's pictures would give you some idea of it—which is not surprising, since Matisse's colour does show definite Oriental influences, though I doubt his ever having seen these Central Asian walls. Apart from the colour I do not think we can say that this imagery ever rose to great imaginative heights.

The burning of Buddha (208) is perhaps one of the best. It represents the story of how the Buddha's body, when placed on the funeral pyre, would not burn until one of his favourite disciples had had time to come

and kiss his feet, whereupon the flames leapt up all round. But in spite of a certain expressiveness in the pose and expression of the Buddha, we cannot say that this comes anywhere near to the great Christian iconography of early Italian art.

Of course these works belong to many different periods. Roughly speaking we may say that the later they are the more Chinese influence predominates, the more definite is the aesthetic quality. In this portrait of a Uigur Turkish donor (209) we get Iranian and Chinese traditions so closely interwoven that it is hard to say to which art it belongs.

This (210) is a fragment of the scene of Sakyamuni's flight by night from his palace on his favourite horse, while Yakshas put their hands under the hoofs to prevent its making a noise. The horse is distinctly Persian. In the heads below (211) we have Mongolian types drawn in a distinctly Persian style, with full rounded oval without any of the accented quality which we saw already in Han draughtsmanship.

In this donor, however (212), the artist has definitely come down on the Chinese side. The line is no longer so evenly rounded, so suavely continuous in its flow. There is a greater alertness and vigour in the stroke. You could hardly have a better epitome of the fundamental difference between the Persian and Chinese aesthetic idea. I do not pretend that this equals the finest Chinese drawing, but it is the work of a very real artist.

As early as the fourth century the Tartar chiefs who were settled in North China had become converted to Buddhism. By the middle of the fifth, one of these chiefs managed to become paramount, to unite all the Tartar forces and to conquer the whole of China as far as the Yangtse. This was the beginning of the Wei Dynasty. This Wei emperor imposed Buddhism as the State religion in North China, and even in the South, which remained purely Chinese, Buddhism tended to prevail. Under the Wei kings in Central China enormous Buddhist monuments were made. As in Turkestan, chapels and halls were carved out of rock faces, and the imagery was also sculptured in the living rock. The central

pillar (213), left as a support in the middle of such a hall, with its surface covered with Buddhist reliefs, gives an example. And this (214) is the central figure of Buddha, round which an apse has been excavated with attendant figures in smaller niches. It is a very grandiose idea, and we see that the Chinese artists were able to rise to the idea of a supernatural, idealized human type when once they were faced with this problem, though it was one that was fundamentally opposed to their native outlook. The vast amount of labour entailed by the excavation and sculptural decoration of the temples precluded the possibility of any very high aesthetic standard. The greater part must have been done by skilled stone-cutters rather than by real sculptors. All that could be hoped for, all indeed that was really required, was a general impressiveness of effect; and that is certainly attained in this figure. But the actual execution shows that mechanical simplification which is the outcome of using art for its prestige value. The main lines of the figure are admirably understood: but the actual forms are summary and without any fullness of content.

The Buddha in a niche (215) is a more individual work with a more searching and sensitive handling, especially in the beautifully designed folds of the drapery. There is, too, a fine sense of spatial values in the placing of the figure in the niche and a peculiarly classic taste in the simple design of the festooned canopy with its t'ao t'ieh marks to give it the right accent and force.

Buddha showed on one occasion a reprehensible want of consideration for aesthetics. It was when in order to convert some doubting Indian prince he appeared surrounded by a thousand repetitions of his own form. The representation of this event (216) was, as you see, not conducive to good design; and it was a particularly favourite theme because the mere multiplication of figures of Buddha was an act of piety, and the figures had then a multiplied magic power. And here we touch on one of the constant dangers to art of religious belief. In proportion as the image is sacred, the quality of it as art is irrelevant. The moment it can be recognized as symbolizing the holy being, the

worshipper is satisfied—a fact that one can verify any day in a Roman Catholic church. For religious art is essentially a mechanism, a means to a practical end—the creation of magic. Under this influence it tends to lose all its spiritual power and to become entirely materialist and utilitarian.

This representation of Buddha taking leave of his horse (217) has a certain charm in the general disposition of light and shade, but is extremely clumsy and indifferent in its execution. But it is not surprising to find that the Chinese sculptors express their most profound feelings not when they are engaged on the idealized figures of the Buddha and other divine beings, but on the merely human attendants and worshippers. For instance, the central figure of Buddha in this relief (218) is quite conventional and superficial, but the subsidiary figures engraved on the walls show a much more intimate and delicate feeling. No. 219 shows the group of donors in detail. I suspect they are members of the royal court, and here the feeling becomes far more intense and compulsive. The slow processional movement of the group of nobles is extremely moving and impressive; and mark with what subtle ingenuity the artist avoids any monotony by the varied heights and the suggestions of space and depth given by the various inclinations of the figures, what variety he gets by his use of the standards and flabellums that are waved over the royal party. We cannot help thinking of Justinian and his Court at Ravenna; but this is a more advanced, more 'savant' art—by which I mean learned without the pejorative implications of that word.

It is, of course, essentially a pictorial and non-sculptural art. It carries on the great tradition of the Han painters, but one cannot deny that the art has gained from Buddhist influences a new exaltation of the emotional pitch. It has something of that *recueillement* and serenity of mood in which Buddhism found the highest achievement.

In the single figure of Buddha from one of the Buddhist caves (220) we find that the sculpture of the Wei period occasionally attained to a similar expressive power. The movement, which is felt with extra-



ordinary sureness, is carried through in a single wave-like sweep of surprising simplicity, and yet without the slightest approach to empty schematization. It is felt throughout every phase with all its complex suggestions of mood and character. An extraordinary suggestion of abstracted contemplative absorption is given by the complete relaxation of the hands. The drapery is everywhere defined in curves of intimate sensibility. Trace, for instance, the almost imperceptible inflections of the veil as its edge falls from the headdress on to the face and then moulds itself to the underlying forms of the body. This, too, is surely the work of a great artist.

Some of the most beautiful Buddhist sculpture of the time is found in small pieces, which were used in private shrines (221). They almost always have an expression of a peculiar tenderness and delicacy of feeling—a kind of serenity and gaiety which reminds us of thirteenth-century French sculpture—even when they hardly can be the work of a great individual artist. They typify the common feeling of the period.

In this particular example a beautiful harmony is effected by the use of plastic and pictorial design together. The sculptured figures are kept very simple and broad and the background is delicately enriched by variations of different linear designs which create an exquisite decorative ensemble.

In this figure (222) from the side of such a stele the Buddhist feeling of the time comes to find expression. It has an almost Botticellian graciousness and delicacy in the voluptuous sweetness of its linear rhythms, though it has, too, a serenity and gaiety which is more like Fra Angelico. Note the tremulous sensibility of the lines which give vitality and force to a design whose extreme simplicity would otherwise make it a little empty of content. You have only to imagine these lines cut with mechanical precision to see that it would become intolerably dull and empty.

Some of the small bronze Buddhas made for private worship show the same almost overstrained refinement and subtlety of expression in the languid attenuation of the form (223).

There is also a great deal of secular Wei sculpture, mostly the terra-cotta figures which were buried in tombs to accompany the dead person. Some of these are delightful realistic genre pieces of everyday life. This painting (224) may be earlier, and is at all events more purely Chinese than most Wei. It reflects for us wonderfully the refinement and courtliness of Chinese society. The figures are full of life, and the poses, in spite of their subtlety, are intensely evocative of character.

The two Wei statuettes (225) are full of character and vitality, with that remarkable feeling for pose and movement which seems almost constant even with such minor artists as would be employed on these. We notice, too, that something of the peculiar tenderness of expression which Buddhist art had created for ideal types flows over into these everyday people, just as a similar predominant mood did in the French sculpture of the thirteenth century.

But the realism of the Tartar horseman (226) is rather forbidding. This is evidently one of the Tartar cavalrymen whom the Tartar emperors employed in China, but again the general character is vividly realized in the stiffness and solidity of the movement.

Even more remarkable is the realism of the camel (227). How well the artist has felt that gesture of the head with which the camel gives vent to its disgruntled obstinate resentment. It is, of course, more literal and more picturesque than the animal sculpture of the previous period, but it still keeps touch with the inner life; it has not become merely descriptive and external.

I cannot draw any sharp distinction between the Wei art and that of the Sui Dynasty which followed it in A.D. 589. This dynasty reunited the north and south and no doubt the art becomes more entirely Chinese in feeling. The sculpture tends to lose the exaltation of mood, and the fragile voluptuous beauty of the Wei to become more weighty and more solidly and consistently plastic. This feeling for gravity and this realization of the full plastic volume of the figure, this complete expression of the greatest possible amplitude, is seen in this magnificent and imposing

Bodhisattva (228). It has lost the graciousness, the gaiety of the earlier art, but perhaps realizes more impressively the remoteness from all mundane affairs, the divine abstraction of the Buddhist ideal. The drapery is reduced to forms of extreme conciseness, almost bareness: there is no concession to decorative enrichment. It shows Buddhist art being reclaimed as it were, and brought back into the austerer formal systems of early Chinese art.

This Sui Buddha (229) is a dated bronze image of the Sui Dynasty—a figure for a private altar representing Buddha and the attendant Bodhisattvas. This has much more decorative charm—for which the Bodhi tree under which Buddha attained enlightenment gives excuse—but the figures themselves show the same spareness and austerity, the same full plastic realization. The Sui Dynasty was succeeded almost immediately by the T'ang. This repeated the situation of the Han—once again China was united into a powerful empire capable of dominating the Mongol tribes of Central Asia. But the imperialism of T'ang times did not have the same effect on art as the Han imperialism. This is perhaps largely because it was fervently Buddhist, and Buddhism implied a spiritual ideal which counteracted the tendency to mechanical perfection. It laid stress on the evocative power of art to suggest those spiritual conditions approved of by Buddhism. If you will let the word pass in its vaguest sense, we might almost say that it gave a romantic tendency to T'ang art which contrasts with the more matter of fact Confucianism of the Han period.

It was a time of national self-confidence, of conscious pride in Chinese culture—it was *inter alia* the great period of Chinese poetry, producing men like Li Po and Po Chü-i—and its art reflects this exuberant energy and self-confidence. Look at the handling of small T'ang bronze animals (230) and you will see what I mean. The stray nervous accents on the form are everywhere stated with tremendous sureness and left as the first thumb stroke modelled the wax without any attempt to smooth it over or make it more regular. There is nothing of the high polish of some of the Han pieces. Look too at the tremendous energy expressed in

the movements. There is certainly a kind of romantic delight in whatever is extreme and vehement in expression.

The charger (231) is from the tomb of the Emperor Tai Tsung made in A.D. 637. On his tomb he had portraits of all his favourite chargers. Clearly the need to give to these reliefs an impressive monumental gravity and solidity imposed a certain restraint on the artist's exuberance, but what a straining energy underlies this apparent stillness. The horses of this period seem to revert to the massive types of the Han, very distinct from the small and agile Mongolian type, and the artist—though we do not know his name it is probable that for the emperor's tomb a recognized artist was employed—the artist has accepted all the clumsiness and stolidity both of horse and man, and has everywhere underlined this character both in his arabesque and in the choice of a high relief—and yet we see what a conscious and learned artist he was by his refusal to use that relief fully in the interior planes so that the flatness of the general surface of the monument is not interfered with. He understood how to give at once the idea of high relief, to use that for its suggestions of mass and force, and yet not contradict the architectural function of the relief.

The ram's head (232) is another masterpiece of T'ang sculpture, and again we have this feeling of controlled energy and force that is held in check by the organizing intelligence. We almost get back to the spirit of the Chou designers in some of these T'ang works. Here again we get the feeling of the life of the animal even within the strict formal compression, and how free and sensitive the cutting is—look at the corrugations of the horn, how they are given by a series of sharply cut grooves which the artist has refused to retouch or regularize. Or here in this owl pot (233) we see that the power to keep the life and character of the animal even when almost all likeness is destroyed—the power which Chinese artists share with the Scythians—still persists. The suggestion of vital energy of movement persists even in the body and stance of the pot.

But T'ang art is mainly familiar to us from the smaller terracotta sculptures which were buried in tombs to serve the earth-

spirit of the departed. A great majority of these are mere commercial products of no artistic merit, as we know to our cost now that they have become the fashion. But occasional pieces such as the horse (234) are of fine quality, and again we note the romantic exuberance and energetic handling.

This lady riding (235), which suggests that women have more than once gained and then lost their liberty, is a delightful trouvaille in movement.<sup>1</sup>

Some of the Buddhist bronzes of the period are also very beautiful. This example (236) is of course very near to the Sui style, and it may belong there, but it has already the energy and force of T'ang art. The firm poise and balance of the figure and the vigorous relief are very striking.

The T'ang was a period of general artistic activity, and linear design was no less cultivated than in the Han, as you can see from this Buddhist engraved stone (237). Here of course the T'ang artist is working in the tradition of Buddhist design handed down from Wei times and his line has to be in harmony with the mood of serenity and repose which the Buddhist ideal required. But within that limit what artistry, firmness and assurance there is in the line, what energy the slight suggestions of movement indicate. The balance of the design, too, the choice of quantities for the larger forms which hold the pattern, show a highly deliberate and complete art.

This leads us directly to the painting of T'ang times and in fact China has always looked back to the T'ang as the golden age of painting. At this point then I want to give you a very rapid review of Chinese painting, and for that I shall go back in time to Han painting and give some idea of its development up to T'ang times.

Look again at the Han bricks (195, 196). I doubt if they are equalled by any later Chinese painting that has come down to us. The nearest in point of time is the celebrated roll in the British Museum (238, 239)

<sup>1</sup> The original figure referred to in the lecture, of a lady playing polo, has proved impossible to obtain. A similar figure has been substituted.

called the Instructions of the Governess, which is attributed to Ku Kai-shih, a celebrated name of the fourth century, i.e. just about a century later than our Han artist. This is almost certainly not by Ku Kai-shih and cannot be dated with certainty, but it must belong to the pre-T'ang period.

In this the line is far more suave and gentle in its rounded curvature. The first scene (238) represents a family with a distinguished looking gentleman surrounded by his wife, his concubines and their offspring—one of the little boys is having his hair combed, at which he is protesting vigorously. It is a scene of domestic peace and contentment—the grouping of the figures is admirably planned to build a pyramidal design which the gentle rhythmic flow of the line binds together into a clearly felt unity.

Again in the scene where the Emperor is conversing with the governess in her bedroom (239), there is a similar serenity and elegance in the line. Although the drawing of these figures lacks the incisive energy and evocative power of the Han artists, something of the psychological situation which is tranquil without emotional stress does, I think, come out in the gestures and regard of the figures. But again it is the elegant easy flow of the rhythm and the skilful disposition of the picture space that are the chief interest. It is curious to note how little the suggestion of pictorial space depends upon accurate perspective. It does not in the least destroy the impression that the top of the bed cubicle is in inverted perspective. We realize quite clearly the relative positions of the figures amid their surroundings.

But this scroll, though it is a striking illustration of the court life of the period, is not I think a work of the highest kind. It marks the extraordinary refinement and delicacy of Chinese culture even amid the troubled times which succeeded the fall of the Han Empire—but it is essentially a courtly work, and polite, impeccable in its taste, too unimpassioned and uninspired to move us much. Even the composition strikes us rather as admirably balanced and correct than as the decisive discovery of a creative imagination.

The Emperor (240) is from a scroll in Berlin representing thirteen great emperors of the past, and is almost certainly by a T'ang artist, perhaps Yen Li-pen. It is clearly in the same tradition as the Ku Kai-shih, but shows greater energy in the line, greater vitality in the figures and a more varied rhythmic harmony, though even this lacks the rapidity and instantaneity of the Han draughtsmen.

It is very difficult to say anything definite about early Chinese paintings, because in spite of the enormous amount of art-criticism and art-history which was written even in these early periods very few pictures exist of which the actual origin is known—and the Chinese themselves scarcely distinguished between an original and a later copy by another great artist. For even great masters spent much of their time reproducing earlier masterpieces.

We cannot be positive that the so-called Ku Kai-shih is not a sixth-century copy of a fourth-century original. For instance the Collating of the Books (241) is probably only a later, perhaps a Sung copy of a T'ang picture by Yen Li-pen. If it is a copy it is by a master who kept the freedom and delicacy of his line and here the composition is to my mind a real discovery. It gives us a shock of surprise to feel, as we do at once, that all these figures with the complicated interplay of their gestures build up so inevitable a unity.

The darks of the scarves and hair are beautifully disposed so as to carry through a kind of musical rhythmic theme which is inwardly exhilarating, and the play of directions given by the movements of the figures are freely contrasted and balanced. Such a power of realizing the plastic interplay of a number of figures in a space like this is achieved only in highly developed artistic traditions. Masaccio was perhaps the first European artist who had arrived at this point of pictorial science.

With the Clerical orgy again (242) we cannot be sure of the date of the actual execution. The subject of the drunken Taoist monk goes back to the sixth century and no one doubts the early date of the actual forms of dress accessories, etc. I suspect that this is by a T'ang artist,

possibly the celebrated Yen Li-pen. Certainly no other picture of the great classic epoch which I have seen gives me the same feeling of being in the presence of a great master as this.

What first strikes us is the extraordinary atmospheric quality of the whole tone, the delicacy of the contrasts and yet the firmness of the contours, which seem to be precise without ever becoming hard or mechanical. The effect of the delicate white drapery of the curtains, the way these simple forms dominate and unify the composition is extraordinary. And the space even beyond the far edge of the tent-like construction is made vividly sensible. Of course much of this is lost in the reproduction owing to the extreme subtlety and delicacy of the original and the darkening of the silk on which it is painted. But I hope something of its mysterious richness and harmony comes through. The drawing is very different from that of the Ku Kai-shih, for the rhythm is far less obvious and is full of surprising variations and inflections. Nothing of the expression is sacrificed to mar the elegance and continuity of flowing curves. Look, for instance, at the ugly square mask of the anxious attendant to the right of the drunken priest or the almost brutal forms of the drunken figures to the right. It is not easy to enter into the spirit of this strange work. The stories about it in Chinese writers would suggest that it is a satire on the drunkenness of the priest, but the whole effect is one of lyrical beauty, almost of tenderness and compunction. And after all it does not much matter what the artist may have intended—what we feel is what came through from the artist's unconscious reactions, what transpires inevitably from the quality of his handling and the harmonies of his tone contrasts—and this belongs to the universal language of art which leaps across all divisions of space and time and puts us into direct contact with the artist's spirit.

This Arhat (243), or hermit, belongs to a series assigned to Kuan Hsiu of the later T'ang. They are very unusual works, much more individual in style than anything else of the time if we except the Clerical orgy which is perhaps later. Here we seem to touch more



nearly the romantic vehemence of some of the T'ang sculpture. They exemplify a type of imagery of which we have very little in Western art—serious, perhaps even religious caricature; we are apt to regard caricature as purely comic, but there is nothing inherently necessary in that connection. These are certainly very impressive renderings of character pushed to almost impossible extremes, and yet without ceasing to be convincing. They are also unusual in their powerful suggestion of plastic relief—they are less linear, more sculptural, than most Chinese paintings, and in that respect more akin to Western pictorial ideas.

This is another eighth-century painting (244), a part of the frescoes in the Buddhist caves of Tun Huang in the far West. It is probably by a minor provincial artist but has a strangely moving effect by reason of its odd perspective presentation of a scene with its strong patterned treatment of the tree trunks against the fortress walls and the fighting figures below. It shows that resourceful power of the Chinese of conveying spatial impressions by means scarcely known to Western art and, as usual, their extraordinary feeling for interval.

If this hermit (245) is by Lung-mun as is supposed it belongs to the eleventh century. It is certainly the work of a great master. These simple economical lines have a strange evocative power, giving us not only the whole space and atmosphere of this woodland scene but a feeling of a remote and mysterious mood to which the figure of the hermit wrapped in profound meditation as he watches the deer in the park adds a note of poignancy. I cannot help likening this to Giorgione's equally mysterious picture of the three astrologers.

It is extraordinary to have achieved such almost photographic realism in the drawing of the horses (246) with such an effect of style—such evident aesthetic purpose in the relations of the parts. It is the sense of inevitability in the placing of these forms within the picture rectangle—the choice of quantity and interval, for which the Chinese seem gifted to a point rarely attained by Western artists. Degas may be cited as one of those who most thoroughly understood this Chinese quality.

That there was a great school of landscape painting as early as the T'ang dynasty there can be no doubt, but nothing of it remains. This Sung copy (247) is after Wang Wei, the greatest landscapist of T'ang times; but it clearly shows more the feeling of Sung than of T'ang times in the delicacy and fragility of its forms. It is strange to think that in the eleventh or twelfth century Chinese civilization had reached such a point as this—could give to individuals that detachment from the ordinary concerns of life that would enable them to indulge in such a sophisticated response to natural appearances as this. Only people who sought their pleasures in contemplation rather than action could arrive at such a deep understanding of the spiritual overtones of natural appearances as this artist has expressed.

It is a very curious fact that the Chinese, who disregarded the obvious effects of light and shade in their rendering of persons and objects, should have been thus sensitive to the far subtler tone relations by which we express such atmospheric effects—and should in this direction have anticipated Western art by nearly 1000 years. Nothing quite like this can be seen in Europe before the later nineteenth century. Rubens is the only artist of earlier times who noted and expressed these moments when the familiar forms of the landscape are veiled and transmuted by the birth of sunrise or twilight—but his robust and straightforward nature was incapable of the remote elusiveness and the subtle implications of such a work as this. Perhaps Seurat gives us our nearest European parallel, and he too, like this T'ang artist, relied mainly for his expression upon the feeling for intervals.

## IX

### INDIAN ART

ALTHOUGH I do not feel very sure that these lectures are profitable to you, I have recently been compelled to admit that they are decidedly good for me. Having set myself the task of giving you a general survey of different arts and periods I have been compelled to study a little more carefully certain arts that I have hitherto passed over with a superficial and supercilious glance. This is particularly the case with Indian art. The general aspect of almost all Indian works of art is intensely and acutely distasteful to me. It is excessive and redundant, it shows an extravagant and exuberant fancy which seems uncontrolled by any principle of co-ordination and, above all perhaps, the quality of its rhythms displeases me by its nerveless and unctuous sinuosity. In striking contrast to Chinese art, the sensuality of Indian artists is exceedingly erotic—the leitmotiv of much of their sculpture is taken from the more relaxed and abandoned poses of the female figure. A great deal of their art, even their religious art, is definitely pornographic, and although I have no moral prejudices against that form of expression it generally interferes with aesthetic considerations by interposing a strong irrelevant interest which tends to distract both the artist and the spectator from the essential purposes of a work of art.

I have always been tempted, then, to write off Indian art as one which could yield but little to the searcher for aesthetically significant objects, but the need to clarify and express my feelings with regard to it has very much modified this attitude. I have had to recognize that although the Indians are almost totally lacking in that organizing and co-ordinating power without which no cogent and inevitable unity can be achieved, they none the less are gifted to an extraordinary extent with what I

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should call plastic facility. They have a very vivid sense of natural form and are able to reproduce it with extraordinary accuracy and ease, so that the most complicated movements of the figure present no difficulties to them.

I said in speaking of Chinese art that it was essentially familiar to us and I tentatively suggested that this was partly due to the fact that their civilization has been, like ours, strongly tinged with rationalism. I suggested that the power to recognize logical necessity might be in some way akin to the power to construct artistic unities in which the relations of the parts obeyed what I called a sensual logic.

Now the Indian is one of the most completely anti-rationalist civilizations that has ever existed. Their vast synthetic religious systems seem to us to treat with sublime indifference the antinomies of logical distinction. They refuse altogether to analyse and distinguish. They can reconcile entities that to us seem contradictory or opposed. And their art seems to bear this out. What we should regard as gross sensuality may be to them a constituent of the highest spiritual condition, and crude erotic representations may fitly be employed in temples to the purest abstractions of divinity. The Hindus must in these respects appear to us, and indeed have appeared to many other peoples, among the most enigmatic people in the world, and it is not surprising therefore that their art is difficult of access to the Western mind in most respects.

But it will be best to look at examples and to try to deduce from them the dominant and peculiar traits of this peculiar art.

The earliest pieces date from the reign of the great Buddhist King Asoka in the third century B.C.

The Asoka pillar is an example of the highly stylistic art derived from Achaemenid Persian originals. Darius had conquered North-West India about 500 B.C., and evidently the art he brought with him still gave the key to Indian sculptors. This pillar was erected by Asoka to mark the spot where Buddha first set in motion the wheel of the law. It is lacking in any distinctive character; the forms are purely decorative with little sense of design.

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This monster (248), from another Asoka monument, is a slightly more vital design, but in detail it repeats the mechanical insensitive quality of all Achaemenid art. The next example is of the first century B.C., the great Buddhist stupa at Sanchi with its elaborately carved triumphal arches or gates.

In the figures from one of these gates (249) distinctively Indian qualities are already apparent. We note the extraordinary power of imitative realism. This elephant is quite astonishingly elephantine. Except for the eye, which is very much enlarged and humanized, this has the specific character and the very texture of the skin of an elephant, and the artist has given the sloppy shambling gait of the legs to a nicety, and no less the languid swaying movement of the trunk. But it is rather an extraordinary likeness than an interpretation in plastic terms of the animal's inner life such as we find in Siberia and China. It comes nearer to the photographic realism of much bad modern art than to such interpretative masterpieces as the T'ang ram (232). Something similar transpires in the treatment of the Yakshini (a kind of fairy spirit), who leans out from the edge of the gate post in a pose which became almost an obsession of Indian artists. This provocative *déshanchement* of the female figure—we have to use a French word for this for the French are the only European people who have elaborated with a similar intensity of interest and frankness of expression the erotic aspects of the female figure—this *déshanchement* then, became as I say an obsession—it is this type of curve that pervades a great quantity of Indian sculpture, even when it is purely decorative and non-representative. If we compare this sinuous and flaccid curve with the controlled energy expressed by the rounded rectangular system of curvature of early Chinese art we get the essential difference between the spiritual attitudes of the two peoples. We shall see other examples which will make this clearer. But what this figure shows also is the extraordinary capacity of these Indian artists to seize and express the most complicated plastic systems. They have perfect freedom of plastic direction. You remember with what slow, hesitating and tentative steps Egyptian and

Sumerian sculptors liberated themselves from the flat frontal approaches to the plastic structure of a human figure, and we shall find precisely the same thing in Greek art; but this artist who belongs, remember, to the beginning of truly Indian art, can twist his torso at any angle, can relate his limbs to the trunk in any possible pose. In short, his imagination evolves directly and freely in three-dimensional space, whereas Western artists can only achieve this freedom step by step and as it were by deduction from a series of two-dimensional elevations. This is a very remarkable gift and is one of the chief characteristics of Indian art. It is equally apparent in the early statue of a flute-playing divinity (250).

Indian architecture expresses no less clearly this extraordinary plastic facility. The Hindus are, I think, the only people who have conceived of a building as an object carved out of a solid block rather than as a structure built up by elevations which are joined together. It is almost unthinkable that a man whose point of departure was that of a constructor would arrive at such an idea as the temple of Bhubanesvar (251), where there are no façades, no dominant aspects, but rather an equal protrusion in any direction around a central core. Of course this was in fact constructed and not carved from the solid block, but it shows how the sculptor's—the excavator's—imagination has dominated the constructor's or builder's. And often enough the temples are actually excavated out of the solid rock, as is the case in the temple at Ellora (252). Only a people gifted with an extremely free plastic imagination—a people to whom this difficult art of discovering a formal structure within the shapeless block presented no obstacle—would have dreamed of undertaking such a colossal work of sculpture as this. It is true that here rectangular aspects facilitate the control, but with what extraordinary ease the artist breaks the uniformity of surface at any point by immense saliences and deeply hollowed-out recessions. Only the most daring and advanced of the Italian Baroque architects, men like Pietro da Cortona and Bernini, arrived at such plastic freedom in architecture, and this dates from the eighth century.

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The other characteristic of Indian art which I alluded to at first, its want of organizing controlling power, its lack of sensual logic, is less evident here. Indeed, the temple at Ellora is exceptional in Indian art in this respect. The main pavilion is extremely lucid in design. The simplicity of the base—its supporting power well emphasized by the stepped recession—is followed by the heavy enrichment of the frieze and then by the relief of a flat surface, and this leads to a second enriched member, here quite rightly more delicate and less massive. This leads by a curved inflection, to the dominant black shade of the pavilion with its massive rectangular supports—the broad curved overhang above it being a fine invention admirably suggesting its protective function. But elsewhere a good opportunity for a contrasting simplicity is frittered away by gratuitous corbellings or there is a capricious and disconcerting change of scale to the series of minute reliefs. These destroy a much needed plane surface and remain quite out of key with the general distribution of light and shade. It is an example of that lack of sense for proportionate quantities (which is so essential to our idea of organic design), and I have gone into it at length because among Indian constructions this temple approximates more nearly to both Western and Chinese classic ideas.

The tower of Madura (253) gives a truer picture of the typical Hindu temple and shows fully that lack of co-ordination and logical correlation of parts which is so disturbing to the Western mind, though of course certain periods of Gothic architecture have approximated to this. What a complete want of syntax!

Let us return to the sculpture. That of Sanchi, which we have looked at, shows us the Hindu genius liberating itself from Achaemenid traditions, but it had hardly done this—had scarcely had time to set about its own Buddhist iconography—when another influence came in; this was the Greco-Buddhist art of Bactria which we studied at the moment of its voyage across Central Asia. In India the same art was modified in a different direction, in Gandhara in North-West India, where the two arts first came into contact.

In this bearded figure (254) the Indian sculptor is almost literally copying a Hellenistic original, though the pose is one that no Greek figure ever took. This statue (255), which comes from Peshawar, shows the Indian influence at work. The pose here is purely Greek, that of a Zeus. The face suggests a Scythian type, so that it was once supposed to be a portrait of a Scythian king, but it really represents Kuvera, an important figure in Buddhist mythology. Few contacts between two different arts have ever produced such distressing results as this between Greek and Indian. The Greek ideal of nobility when thus translated into the liberal realism which was natural to the Hindu passes at once from the sublime to the ridiculous. And the Greek love of precision here becomes a slippery tightness and deadness of surface which denies at once sensibility and vitality.

The seated Buddha (256) is little better. See how the mean literal naturalism of these heads breaks with the general plastic theme utterly. In the second version (257) the harmony of proportions of the Greek idea of human beauty is maintained, but the drapery shows the Indian unrestraint in the unstructural sinuosity of the folds with their monotonous repetition of nerveless meandering curves. There is moreover, in spite of the religious intention, very little sign of that expression of the inner life which was so striking in the Afghan sculptures from Hadda. In fact the Indians, unlike the Mongols and Iranians of Central Asia, could make no good use of Greek models.

The Mathura school of the second century A.D. marks a considerable step in the re-emancipation of Indian art from this unfortunate contact with Greece. In this single head (258) the type is largely changed in an Oriental direction—note the forms of the eye and the filling of the orbit—though Greek proportions are still followed. Here a very real plastic unity is achieved and the modelling of the mask shows a delicate sensibility. At this last stage we might almost say that the Greek influence was all to the good in restraining Indian exuberance.

The two figures of Yakshas (259) are of the same school and period, and here, although something in the faces shows a trace of Greek ideas,



we are almost back at Sanchis. The figures are purely and typically Indian. Here even more you get the exaggerated *déhanchement* and a frank emphasis on the sexual aspects of the figure, and again you see the plastic freedom of the movement of planes. And here we can appreciate more fully another characteristic of Hindu plastic feeling—its intense and literal realism, its power to reproduce the actual surface and texture of flesh. In fact this Indian realism is almost literally skin deep—we feel at once the elastic softness and resilience of this flesh—our imagination is invited no further; we have no inkling of what lies beneath—of the bony structure which gives to the body its coherence and to the limbs their leverage. Now nearly all great plastic artists have been intensely moved by just this latter aspect of organic forms, because it is by our imaginative apprehension of this skeletal armature that we feel most its self-consistency—its structural unity. In European art this passionate sense of structure has often been pursued to pedantic extremes, but even in China, where no such conscious efforts have been made, you have only to recall that bronze bear (165) I showed you to see how largely the beast's armature helped our realization of its vital power. So that Hindu art is singular in thus combining an extraordinary control of free plastic movement with a marked indifference to the structural mechanism. The Hindu artist's imagination is so enthralled by his feeling for the undulating and yielding movements of the body as a whole and his feeling for the surface quality of flesh, that he places all his emphasis on these aspects, to the exclusion of that fundamental structure which has preoccupied the other great schools of plastic design.

It is interesting to see that the plastic illustrations of Buddhism in India are so naïvely concerned with the sensual aspects of nature, not only in the human figure but in the profusion of tropical animal and vegetable life, when the essential doctrine they were illustrating proclaimed the renunciation of sensual desire as the only means to the highest good. It is also curious to note how much more spiritual beauty was achieved by the rationalist Chinese than the intensely religious Hindus.

The next great monument to be considered is the temple of Amaravati. This is in the Dekkan, far away from North-West India, so that Greek influences scarcely penetrated thither. Here we find a pure Indian art. You know it well from the reliefs which line the staircase of the British Museum. I say you know it well, but perhaps like me you have passed it by hundreds of times, your glance repelled by the general effect, with its chaotic profusion of imagery. One is deterred by the absence of any clear general design, by the absence of any of those plain surfaces which the eye demands to relieve it from this incessant repetition of ebullient and pasty forms—all of about the same size with no co-ordinating or dominating accents. It is like a sentence which meanders on page after page without any recognizable syntactical structure. But if by an effort of will you concentrate your attention on one single relief after another you are now and then rewarded by designs of astonishing power—the level of the work varies immensely and it is only now and again that we are confronted by a real artist.

There is no single piece in the British Museum as good as the scene with an elephant (260) which is at Madras, but there are one or two that are comparable. This is really a proof of the astonishing aptitude of the Hindu sculptors for plastic expression. It tells the story of how the traitor Devadeth made an elephant mad with drink and loosed him against the Buddha. To the left the elephant rushes in, throwing a man about with his trunk and trampling on another; behind is the terror-stricken crowd with two lovers who cling together in an agony of fear while others look from windows: to the right the elephant kneels in submission to Sakyamuni. The story is told with real dramatic feeling and the suggestion of figures crowding together in agitated movement is vividly grim. But what surprises us most is the power of suggesting the space in which this complicated scene takes place. See how effective is the recession of the three figures to the right—how easily and surely we grasp the whole scene. However much we may dislike the uniform, rather fat, rounding of the forms we cannot deny that they are related with a genuine feeling for composition. See how a diagonal starts from

the figure of the onrushing elephant and is admirably taken up and echoed by the forms in the distant group as they prepare to fly, and how this is most dramatically countered by the descending lines of Buddha and his followers approaching undismayed from the right.

It is really a remarkable pictorial design in which the dramatic theme is put to the best uses. And this is the more remarkable because in the great series of Buddhist frescoes at Ajanta we look in vain for any similar understanding.

Some of the caves at Ajanta date from the second century, i.e. nearly the period of the Amaravati relief. The greater part, however, and the more important are of the fourth to seventh centuries. These frescoes show an extraordinarily accomplished and assured art—within the formula which they have accepted the artists are able to express the sacred legend with astonishing ease and confidence; we have no evidence of a period of tentative beginnings.

It is difficult for one who has not seen them to know how far the enthusiastic appreciation of those who have is justified. They are terribly damaged, and even since the earlier accounts of half a century ago they have greatly deteriorated. However, they have recently been reproduced photographically in colours and this enables us to get some idea of the originals. The colour is certainly often of surprising delicacy and beauty—upon a basis of warm neutral tints with dull reds and chocolate browns we find here and there surprising notes of pure pale blues, greens and yellows which have a peculiar preciousness and poignancy. It is, however, mainly in the details of ornamental birds and in the delicate drawings of flowers, animals and birds that the artists show their quality. It is difficult to make much of the compositions as a whole—one scene melts into another—they are often overcrowded and there is very little idea of organizing the figures within the picture space. As you see, the proportion between the figures is so capricious and haphazard that we can get no idea of their relative situations in space; there is in fact nothing like so clear a sense of pictorial design as we have seen in the reliefs of Amaravati, or as we shall find in the reliefs

of Borobadur. We almost have, therefore, to consider each figure separately or to relate them mainly by the decorative value of their silhouettes. The delicacy of the fine contrasts no doubt gives considerable value to this design in the flat. It is comparable in this respect to certain early Chinese paintings, but these designs lack the sense of interval and the balance of direction which we find there. In short, we find here the same defect which lies at the root of the Indian genius, the want of co-ordinating intelligence. Still, in itself this figure of a Bodhisattva (261) holding a blue lotus in his hand is very moving in the dignity and tenderness of its pose. In such figures Indian art does at moments realize the expression of an extraordinary spiritual exaltation.

The only other important Indian paintings which I know of are the frescoes at Bagh of which there are some excellent copies in the British Museum, and judging from these the Bagh artists showed greater powers of organization and a finer grasp of pictorial space than those of Ajanta. Certainly this scene (262), where a crowd of figures, some on elephants, is seen approaching the spectator in sharp perspective, shows an astonishing control of pictorial means. In European art it is only after a long process of trial and error that artists have arrived at this freedom from the frontal aspects of objects; but this particular freedom to accept equally any aspect of objects—the freedom to move equally in every direction of space—characterized Indian sculpture from the first.

Buddhism, though it had been embraced enthusiastically by Asoka and the kings, had never appealed to the mass of the people. And by the eighth century resurgent Brahmanism had superseded Buddhism throughout India. The future of Buddhism lay outside the country of its origin. So that what is called medieval Indian art is all Brahmanic. ! The worship of Çiva in particular—for Brahmanism is a syncretic religion allowing of innumerable aspects—the worship of Çiva inspired perhaps the grandest of all Indian monuments, of which the cave temple at Elephanta is the best.

The hall (263) is sculptured out of the solid hillside. Here perhaps more than anywhere else Indian art has achieved a consistent unity. It

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would be an exaggeration to pretend that the proportions here are as inevitable or as significant as those of our classical architecture, but they express an idea not inadequately. They give one a sense of the vast superincumbent weight of rock which these dwarfish columns sustain with such effort. Even the great cushioned capitals, though their form is eminently unstructural, are not out of harmony with the overtones of the theme. And then the idea of placing a colossal bust of Çiva in the glimmering shadow of a chapel at the far end of this perspective is a fine scenic invention. Here is the figure of Çiva (264)—the supreme spirit of the universe seen under three aspects. At least this is one of several much disputed interpretations of the image. Fortunately we need not concern ourselves with this, for the Western mind soon founders in the shifting quicksands of Indian mythology, where anything can change into something else and where metaphysical speculation is inextricably interwoven with freakish absurdities. What concerns us, however, is that which the universal language of plastic harmony declares, and it must be admitted that here, perhaps as never before nor since, has art found a form capable of giving palpable expression to an idea of supreme cosmic power and self-consciousness. We are often shocked by the monstrosities begotten of Indian religious conceptions, by the many-armed and many-legged divinities; but here, to my mind at least, the three heads do not appear incongruous. We seem able to accept its symbolism as adequately expressing the idea of diverse emanations of a single essence. I think this happy effect is largely due to the sublime invention of the three towering head-dresses which unite into an almost architectural whole, as of a central dome supported by semidomes. These head-dresses, too, add by the fragile delicacy and intricacy of their detail a note of aerial and flowerlike elegance which brings into even greater relief the extremely simple and broad treatment of the faces and torso. All the forms are conceived with the utmost amplitude—look at the daring fullness of the lips—and they are defined with unhesitating directness, and yet there are no strong accents anywhere; the modelling seems enveloped in atmosphere. And here for once our

luscious rhythms of Indian art are held in control. Look, for instance, at the oval of the central mask with its almost rectangular outline; the inflections of the curves are often scarcely perceptible. A side view (265) shows the same exquisite sensibility. Although the formal theme is so evident, see how the lip echoes the chin and is answered by the curves of the brow with more distant echoes from the head-dress; there is here no schematic or mechanical emptiness—the modelling for all its almost austere simplicity is none the less deeply coloured by the sensual tenderness of surface so peculiar to Indian art. Nowhere else, I think, is this intense voluptuousness so nicely balanced by a controlled severity of conception.

The Kailasa at Ellora belongs approximately to the same date: this relief (266) is from there. Here again I think Indian art rises to the highest point of plastic beauty. It has a nervous strength which is quite unusual in Indian art and brings it nearer to our own conceptions of the figure—look, for instance, at the modelling of the woman's torso with its controlled firmness and vigour. It reminds me almost of a drawing by Degas. This is very unlike the relaxed pliancy of most Indian sculpture and so, rather paradoxically, although the subject is so frankly voluptuous it is so completely transposed into a plastic harmony that there is no interference with our aesthetic pleasure by irrelevant suggestiveness, which is incidentally an example of how much more potent are the evocations due to the artist's treatment than are those due to the subject itself.

The river goddess (267) is also from Ellora. It is curious to see how nearly Indian art here approximates to some aspects of European rococo. The curves are more invertebrate, more unctuous, but how like in general effect to some of the wilder inventions of the Louis XV period or perhaps more to its German imitators. And there is great beauty in the swaying movement of the figure through which the rhythm is carried in a continuous phrase, and there is some idea of organic design in the delicate enrichment of the background against which the high relief of the figure tells admirably.

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Of about the same (viz. eighth-century) date is the work at Mamallapuram in the South. Here is one of the temples (268). I suspect that we get too good an idea of its design from the beauty of Monsieur Goloubev's photograph, for the light brings into relief just those salient horizontals which give it a certain unity of effect and veils for us the excessive and too exuberant ornamentation.

Near by is an extraordinary cave temple, a perfect type of the specific quality of Indian art. A long outcrop of rock has been hollowed out at one end to make a porch leading to a sanctuary excavated in the rock and the rest of the rock surface has been covered with a vast profusion of sculptured reliefs (269). Only a people with an extraordinary urge to plastic expression would have conceived such a scheme, and only a people in whom the sense of what we may call visual syntax was almost entirely lacking would set about it in so happy-go-lucky a manner. The only sort of coherence the design has is due to the depression in the native rock. The theme chosen was the descent of the Ganges to the holy river from heaven, and the personified figure of the Ganges is seen in the crack, whilst on either side there troop together to worship it all the men and beasts of the earth. As elephants are the most important animals for the Indians, elephants had to come along; and as they are very large they form the only objects which count in a general view like this, but nothing answers to them on either side of the composition—they just happen to be there. The sculptor has worked just as a child might draw a story in which it was interested, making one figure after another just as each came into his head. I know of no other art where we can find at once such technical competence combined with such want of intelligent control. As nearly always in Indian art, the sculptor shows an extraordinary understanding of the character of the elephants, though also a want of any suggestion of their underlying structure. In detail, too, the figures which crowd this chaotic representation—one cannot call it a design—have often great beauty. The hermit (270) is particularly fine in the expressiveness of the movement, and poise of the head.

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Here is the Ganges descending in the crack. In the two attending figures again (271), there is extraordinary feeling for plastic rhythms and that perfect freedom of movement in all directions which we have noted before. Look, too, at the exquisitely sensitive modelling of the shoulders and breasts of the river goddess.

The art of the Dravidian peoples of South India is mostly Çivaite and derives from the Çivaite art of Elephanta. The Çivaite Carmetic relief is a particularly beautiful example (272). The literal and superficial naturalism of Indian art here too is dominated by a strong feeling for plastic form and the movement is at once strongly held and sensitively expressed. See particularly the slight inflection of the lower part of the torso by the asymmetrical pose of the legs. You see, too, how clearly the whole volume of the chest and shoulders is suggested, and what purity and yet sensibility there is in the contour. It is a little improved for us no doubt by the accident which deprived the figure of its two extra arms. But we certainly have here the expression of a very rare plastic imagination.

I am of course choosing from a vast number of images those which have most interest for me. Perhaps it is as well to see for once from this Jain image (273) how bad Indian religious art can be. The Jains, I believe, cultivate nudity, but it would appear that they get very little good by taking off their clothes as far as any appreciation of the plastic possibilities of the figure are concerned. This figure seems almost to confirm the horror of idolatry which used at one time to inspire such eloquence in Christian missionaries—a horror which it is not often given to those who care for art to share.

The temple of Konarak to which this elephant (274) belongs is of later date, thirteenth century. The temple itself is covered with innumerable reliefs from top to bottom so minute and intricate that the vast majority can never be seen at all. Many of these that are low enough down to be visible are as grossly and crudely pornographic as possible. Both of these facts are significant for Indian art. Both are the result of the exclusively religious attitude of the Hindu artist. His work



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is done not primarily for man—it is indifferent whether any man ever sees it—once it has been done it is entirely dedicated to the glory of God. Thus Indian art escapes altogether from the influence of propaganda and the desire for prestige, which we have seen tends to suppress the artist's sensibility. It never has the defects of an official art. In this respect at least it is one of the purest arts that we know. The dedication to the god of pornographic imagery is no less significant—it is part of the Indian's refusal to analyse or make distinctions. Every possible activity is felt by him indiscriminately as a part of his religious life.

As a matter of fact, most of the imagery at Konarak is of inferior quality, chaotic and incoherent, but here where the subject itself impresses plastic unity the result is strangely impressive. There is, too, here an unusual feeling for monumental style—the merely imitative realism of Indian art is not so apparent as, for instance, in the elephants at Mamallapuram—the artist has found a plastic idiom in which to interpret the observed facts. The figures are really composed.

Some of the best South Indian Dravidian sculpture is seen in the bronze figures. This is a twelfth-century example (275). It is a very accomplished work with a singularly consistent feeling for pose which is carried through to the finger-tips. The poise of the head and the rather swaggering posture seem expressive of the same mood as that given by the demonstrative hand. Even the distortion of the long drawn out left arm seems right to balance the rest of the design. The surface, marvellously finished as it is, is expressive of the most unsympathetic qualities of Hindu sensibility—the modelling everywhere has those unctuous modulations from one plane to another—look for instance at the knees—which repel one at a first glance and which it is impossible altogether to disregard even when one admits the mastery of the general design.

This Sinhalese bronze belongs to a similar tradition (276). It is in the British Museum and is, I think, the finest work of Indian art which we possess, but the photograph (which seems to be the best that the British

Museum can produce) is extremely inadequate—all the modelling in the lighter parts has disappeared. The modelling is in fact unusually nervous, energetic and incisive for Indian art—it has little of that unctuous sinuosity which we have so often noticed. The inner life and energy of the figure seem to hold it taut and intense at every point and the delicately modelled hands show this tense and nervous energy in every detail.

We must pass now to further India, for in the early Middle Ages Indian influence spread over an immense area—all round to Annam. Java was Indianized while Buddhism was still ascendant and it remained Buddhist after India had reverted to Brahmanism.

Indeed much the most beautiful examples of Buddhist iconography of the thirteenth century which we possess are the reliefs on the stupa of Borobadur (277). Although the inspiration of these is purely Hindu we are clearly dealing with a different race or at least a different civilization—the disposition of the forms, the choice of quantities and the placing of the accents of light and shade all show a people capable of more deliberation and control than the Hindus. They are people with a finer taste, they exercise more restraint on the exuberance of their fancy and above all the rhythms are soberer, less abandoned; the tempo is graver and slower. It is this restraint exercised upon the Hindu feeling for pose which gives to these figures a peculiar gracious suavity, so that the almost caressing tenderness expressed in their regard and gesture never degenerates into blandishment. They remind us inevitably of some of the early Italian renderings of the St Francis legend in the compunction and delicacy of the feeling. The scene of Prince Sudhana and the water-drawing Kinnaras, apparently a kind of sprite, is beautifully composed in its sequence of subtly changing rhythms. These reliefs are cut in a very gritty volcanic rock which renders impossible any fineness of accent, but it is surprising how much the delicate sensibility of these artists comes through the rather clumsy modelling. The sculpture is conceived almost entirely in terms of light and shade, and great effect is got by the contrast of the deeply undercut reliefs—the

figures almost standing out in the round—and the flat lace-like unemphatic treatment of the decorative bands which divide them.

But what strikes us most, perhaps, is that wherever the scene allows of it, the figures are composed with such a fine sense of balanced and contrasted movements and that in spite of the compression within a restricted space they never appear crowded or constricted.

In the early centuries of our era Indian culture and religion had spread to Cambodia, which was dominated by two rival kingdoms of the Khmer peoples, which we know of only through Chinese chronicles and only by their Chinese names—Fon-nan and Tchen-la. The whole story of their relations and the chronology of their works of art is still extremely vague and hypothetical. What is certain is that late in the ninth century Angkor became the capital and centre of a vast and powerful Khmer empire extending over nearly all further India and Cochin China and that during the early centuries of Angkor—tenth, eleventh and twelfth—there was produced a sculpture of quite distinct and peculiar character.

But we also possess a certain amount of work of the pre-Angkor period, i.e. about the eighth and ninth centuries, and this shows certain Indian affinities.

The pre-Angkor figure in the collection of Mr Stoclet (278) produces a strange effect on one—it is at once familiar—far more familiar than any Indian work—and yet very strange and disconcerting. One's first impression is almost like that of an archaic Greek statue in its strict frontality of pose with the head and figure in the same alignment—but no early Greek statue ever displayed this feeling for the texture and surface of the flesh nor the strange spiritual aloofness of this mysterious smile. A French critic has rather happily defined these early Khmer statues as Indian themes which have passed through an Egyptian artist's brain. That at least expresses something of the dual nature of this art—at once so much more architectural, so much more coherent and logical in its structure, so much firmer in its skeletal framework than the Indian and yet with that sensual spirituality of the East which no Western art quite achieves. That structural coherence will be evident to

you if you notice how assured is the relation of the head to the shoulders, how firmly these are supported by the compact torso and how surely and yet subtly that is poised on the hips. One must suppose that these Khmers, who form, by the by, a quite distinct race, must have had certain very marked innate aptitudes for sculptural form. Even from this statue we might assume that the Khmer were in physique strongly contrasted with the Indians, although at this period the difference is veiled by the influence on the artist of Indian models. Still, you see that the face is shorter and squarer than in Hindu sculptures.

In the later Angkor period, about the eleventh to twelfth centuries, this difference has become very marked. Indeed, Khmer heads (279) seem to be almost the antithesis of any type which we should call Oriental—the square forehead—the rectangular mask, the sharply cut eye orbits and strong horizontal brows, and most of all the narrow straight nose. We might be more likely to find such heads among the Celti-Iberians of Spain than in the Far East. It may indeed be the influence of their special physique on the artists that has led to their more markedly structural, more clearly articulated treatment of plastic planes, in contrast to the continuous sinuosity of the Hindu physique. But it has also been suggested that this very peculiar style owes something to influences coming down from the T'ang art of China, which also has, as we saw before, a supremely logical structure.

Look at the two other Khmer—the one to the right (280) is probably early Angkor, the true Khmer square-faced type, but still showing Indian influence. The left-hand one (281) shows Khmer art merging gradually into the Siamese style, which remained typical of the later art of Angkor and continues from about 1300 to modern times. I think we must suppose that the square-faced conquering race of the Khmers were gradually absorbed by their Malayan subjects and lost their peculiar characteristics. The art is here already fixed in a stylistic formula which scarcely changed throughout the centuries. The early head on the other hand is a masterpiece of delicately sensitive plastic interpretation.

The Hari Hara head (282) is another early Angkor head of Çiva, for

Çivaism seems to have flourished in Cambodia alongside of Buddhism. The Khmer artist here shows his extraordinary restrained power in thus achieving completeness of structure by almost imperceptible contrasts and modelling. The transition of plane in the modelling of the lower lip and chin are of almost miraculous delicacy and sensibility. Moreover, with this structural solidity this artist has the power of suggesting the inner life. It is rarely indeed that any art, whether sculpture or painting, has been able to fix in outward form so elusive, so complex a mental state as is suggested by the mysterious evanescent smile of this infinitely remote and yet gaily compassionate deity. Note how the eyes which are barely indicated are as much involved as the mouth in this fleeting expression.

This Buddha (283) is perhaps a little later. Here the structure is more strongly marked with fuller realization of the actual features. It is in a sense more realistic, but here too the specific qualities of Khmer art are evident. It is still of the square Khmer type, though everywhere the transitions from one plane to another are modulated with elusive subtlety. It is as though the forms were all seen through their atmospheric envelopment—as though the sculptor wished to rival in stone that *sfumato* quality by which artists like Leonardo da Vinci set such store. This may in part be due to the effect of time, but I think very little. It is rather that the sculptor's feeling for his divine type, his desire to express its remoteness and intangibility, led him thus to veil the features with an impalpable mist—but for all that there is no blurring, no uncertainty—the form is everywhere firmly apprehended and strictly stated. You can see here one peculiarity of this Khmer art, namely that it does seem to show a reference to cubical forms: the side of the head has been felt as a flat plane at right angles to the flat plane of the brow. Now all Egyptian and European sculpture shows a similar reference to a solid of square section, whereas nearly all Oriental art seems unconscious of this architectural reference. It may be that this in part explains why these Khmer statues are so easily apprehended by us, why they seem to speak to us in our own sculptural idiom.

In treating the figure we find the same almost Egyptian frontality in contrast to the free movement of Hindu sculpture. There is great beauty and vitality in the poise of the head in this kneeling figure (284), but the Khmer artists have by now lost much of the plastic power of the pre-Angkor statue (278).

In the bronze Buddha of the thirteenth century (285) we see perhaps the very last phase of true Khmer art before it melts into Siamese. It is much less structural—already the forms flow into one another in vague sinuous curves, and the features have become fixed in a rigid schematic design, but there is none the less a curious unearthly beauty about this swaying floating figure.

To the left we see a typical figure of the final stage of true Siamese art (286). The Khmer physical type and the specific Khmer plastic have been absorbed and exist no more. Siamese sculpture still from time to time produced delicate and refined figures, but they conform to a fixed stylistic formula; the creative impulse is dead and they need not concern us. For the most part Siamese art is distinguished by the richness and elegance of its decorative effects. In this it is still, for all its exuberance, a little more controlled, a little less chaotic than later Hindu ornamentation, but that I think is all that can be said for it; whereas the Khmer art which preceded it produced as I think you will admit some of the greatest masterpieces of sculpture in the world.

## X

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**N**O art is so difficult to understand intimately as that of Greece. We are of course so familiar with it that this may sound paradoxical, but you will see that that very familiarity may be one of the obstacles.

I don't suppose any of you were brought up on the Bible as were those of my generation. In our early youth, at an age when we could understand scarcely any of it, we became so familiar with the words, we learned to take them so much for granted, that whenever we tried to read them the too familiar words refused to bite on the imagination. It required many years of forgetfulness before the Bible became as it were depolarized, so that one could really get into some sort of contact with the various authors. Similarly even in homes where art was in true Victorian fashion thoroughly despised, Greek art was supposed to have some mysterious educational value, and the young were taken periodically to be exposed to the influence of Greek sculpture in the dingy rooms of the British Museum; and again the too early and unintelligent familiarity deadened the receptive faculties. We learned to take Greek art for granted while still believing that, as we had been told, it was the greatest art in the world.

It is an extraordinary chapter in that great still unwritten book, the history of taste—this which deals with the supreme sanctity of Greek art. Ingres gives us a measure of what it implied just at the moment when Medieval art was being discovered by the Romantics, i.e. when we were confronted with an alternative aesthetic ideal. Ingres says that

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Greek art is so infinitely the greatest achievement of human artistic effort that everything that has been accomplished since, all that Raphael and Michelangelo had done, is but a partial copy of that inimitable whole. All that anyone can hope to do is to arrive by imitation at some likeness to certain aspects of Greek art. And yet what Greek art had Ingres seen? Genuine Greek pots, no doubt; but he never came to England, he never saw the Elgin marbles. He had seen the Vatican, but how much indisputable original work of the great period was there there in his day? Very little. For the most part he must have looked at Roman copies and a few originals of Hellenistic times. The Greek art which he worshipped was very largely an imaginary construction based on hints, and magnified by a kind of religious enthusiasm which was intensified by his bitter hatred of the work of his contemporaries. His love of Greek art was almost a function of his hatred of Delacroix.

And this religion of Greek art was strangely potent, in spite of the Gothic revival. Even Ruskin, whose passion for Medieval art was profound, never, I think, fairly balances the Medieval aesthetic against the Greek. He, again, swallows Greek art whole, and when he wants a foil to Gothic points in eloquent disgust to the immorality and insincerity of the Renaissance.

The content implied by the words 'Greek art' is constantly changing. Up till the latter part of the nineteenth century it meant mainly copies of fifth-century art and Hellenistic art. Probably if you had shown Ingres a real archaic Greek statue he would have begun by denying that it had anything to do with Greece, and if he were convinced would have simply ruled it out as not expressing the Greek spirit. Then in the later nineteenth century came the sharp distinction between fifth-century and later art, with a dogmatic exclusion of almost all this later art from the true canon as decadent. When I was young the story of Greek art began with the pediment at Ægina and ended with a melancholy sigh at the Hermes of Praxiteles. This was followed by a gradual absorption of the later archaic within the canonical works. But—and this is the strange fact—at each period, although Greek art meant quite different things at



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different times, all through the idea that Greek art was the supreme canon of *all* art remained unchallenged. Thus in a fairly recent work Mr Dalton, writing of Byzantine art, estimated it always according to its approximation to, or departure from, Classic Greek; and Mons. Grousset, whose admirable books on oriental art have been of the greatest use to me again and again in these lectures, when he wishes to praise highly a Chinese or Indian statue says that it is like an Athenian relief.

The revolt against this peculiar attitude to Greek art came first from the artists somewhere about 1907. It was they who first said Negro statues were not mere ethnographical curiosities but serious works of art from which we can learn; and then they again began to study Maya and Chinese works in the same spirit. I do not think any art-historian would on his own initiative have ventured to treat each different art on its own merits and each as an expression of a distinct aesthetic idea until the artists had made the move, and, as I say, the art-historians continue still to keep Greek art as the expression of the only true aesthetic—a kind of measuring rod by which to estimate all other arts. In this connection two recent works on Greek art afford interesting evidence. One modern art-critic, greatly daring after the battle, has made a wholesale attack on Greek art, the more sensible part of which consists in a demonstration that most of the praise of the great Greek artists is based on work that is no longer seriously claimed as theirs—for example, that critics have talked endlessly about the genius of Pheidias though we know of no work which is certainly by him. From this to saying that our admiration is without foundation appears an easy step. What this critic omits to mention is that we do possess certain works like the Elgin marbles which should be discussed on their merits even though they are by a nameless sculptor quite as much as if we knew them to be by Pheidias. The fact is that the value of Greek sculpture is not affected by whether we can put names to it or not. This then is a frank attempt to dethrone Greek art altogether, partly with a view to making people prefer the work of certain modern sculptors.

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A much more curious phenomenon in the battle over Greek art is the publication of a book called *l'Art Grec* by a number of French critics of the *avant garde*. It is illustrated with a most remarkable series of photographs. These people profess to have discovered the real Greek art at last, i.e. they propose a new series of canonical works. Their selection includes all those completely primitive and rudimentary figures which are known as Cycladic; it takes in the earliest and most primitive pottery like the Dipylon vases, then the seventh- and sixth-century sculpture, giving great prominence to the pediment at Corfu (this may be said to be their high-water mark for Greek art), and then the grotesque masks from Sparta. The Hekatompedon figures are also insisted on, even Olympia gets in, but after that all is more or less decadent. The authors manage to conceal awkward facts like the Elgin marbles and Praxiteles, and at this point fall back on provincial and peasant work. Naturally nothing is said of fourth-century and Hellenistic art. This new canon then goes from prehistoric times down to the early archaic. The authors are thus able to prove to their own satisfaction that Greek art should be reinstated in its glorious position because if you look at it at the right angle it is so much like Negro and Polynesian art. As these are now so fashionable in Paris, Greek art must dress itself up as much like a Negro as possible and she can still claim our devotion and reverence.

This seems to me to show that nonsense about Greek art has at last boxed the compass. The pathetic fact about Greek art from the point of view of these Parisian critics is that from the Negro and generally primitive point of view early Greek art is a failure. Look at this archaic bronze (287) and then refer back to the Negro statuettes (30). How empty and rather feeble the Greek work appears.

From all this you will realize how difficult it is for us to get into direct contact with Greek art, for all the approaches to it have been obstructed and overgrown by assumptions and prejudices which have become ingrained in our habits of thought. What powerful taboos have been placed on the sanctuary to keep off prying eyes! But even this is not the

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whole of the story. It is only natural that Greek art should be intimately associated in our minds with other achievements of the Greek genius. And since our culture at its roots owes almost everything to the Greeks in one way or another; since it is they who taught us the use of the discursive intellect, they who were the first and still remain among the best of our philosophers, they who first conceived the possibility of the scientific attitude, they who first gave a philosophic basis even for political theory, and finally they whose poetry still moves us as no other poetry does except our own: since they have shown themselves in all these ways not only the pioneers but still the great examples of European culture, it seems almost a logical necessity to conclude that their art is equally supreme, and not only supreme but the most normal and natural art possible to civilized man.

I say this seemed to follow as a logical necessity, because any system in which the parts all fit together exactly like a Chinese puzzle does satisfy the mind and makes us very unwilling to question its truth. Thus the pattern of Dante's cosmology was so neat, so perfectly interwoven, that it must have been impossible to doubt its truth. And the later nineteenth-century theory of Greek art was equally neat and precise. The Greeks stood for us for liberty as against Oriental tyrannies, therefore while Athens was free Attic art was supremely beautiful. When they lost their liberty their art declined. The Egyptians, Babylonians and Assyrians were enslaved by monstrous superstitions, and their art was correspondingly abnormal and distorted. The Greeks alone had ennobled ancient superstitions by their poetry and humanity, and therefore their religious art was free and noble. And so one could go on indefinitely building up a series of such correspondences into an imposing system, until it became almost impossible to test its truth by really looking at their art dispassionately.

Now I think the general survey which we have made of a number of different arts will prove very helpful in approaching in an entirely fresh and dispassionate spirit the actual works of art of Greek culture. Our experience will at least have warned us of the danger of easy *a priori*

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rationalizations, of rash attempts to correlate the general tone of a culture with its plastic art. We have seen the hideously cruel and monstrous fertility religions of Central America expressing themselves in forms of noble and suave harmonies. We have seen the intellectually backward cultures of Africa giving rise to an art of intense spiritual feeling; we have seen the almost barbarous Scythian nomads producing work of the rarest and subtlest aesthetic intelligence; in fact we have got some idea of the infinite complexity of the human spirit and of its various expressions in works of art. We have seen, I hope, what a way off we are from any sort of philosophy of art, and so perhaps you may not be too much surprised when I say that Greek art, so far from being a supreme realization of the normal aesthetic ideas of mankind, is in fact highly exceptional.

It is first of all exceptional in that it confined itself almost entirely to the human figure and again in its almost exclusive preoccupation with beautiful human beings. This is indeed a most peculiar theory. I do not know of any other art in the world which shares this peculiar obsession with beautiful objects that the Greek does. We shall, however, come back to these two strange peculiarities of Greek art from time to time in discussing the works themselves.

The Greeks were, I suppose, the first people to realize clearly the importance of the individual man; this led them to regard man as the centre of the universe. Everything was to be judged in terms of human values. They quickly got rid of those animal deities which characterized all early religions and which persisted throughout the millennial Egyptian culture. Instead they peopled Olympus with human beings. They made their gods in their own image more completely than any other people. Even Jehovah, that jealous and touchy creation of the Jewish imagination, expands at times to a mysterious, impersonal power, but the clear human contours of the Greek gods are very rarely blurred.

This anthropocentric attitude which isolated man from the rest of nature was one of the causes of the extreme limitation of Greek art. It

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made the study of the human figure the sole preoccupation of the artist. Animals were studied almost entirely from a human point of view—the horse and dog as his half-humanized companions, and a few wild beasts like the lion and eagle because they could be made into striking symbols of certain human attributes. Nothing outside man was regarded as an end in itself. Another exceptional quality of the Greeks was their intense intellectual activity, their restless speculative energy and their power of making generalizations. This, together with their anthropocentrism, led them to conceive of human types or ideals. The gods themselves became such generalized or idealized types of various combinations of human qualities. Now this power of generalizing is a very peculiar one. It really means the power to strike an average of a great many particular cases; and in fact if you look at those compound photographs which at one time were rather frequently made of a great many people of about the same age, you do get something very like a Greek statue. And these compound photographs, or human averages, have the quality which we call beauty. And this fact leads us to the extremely disquieting question, what, if any, is the rôle of beauty in art? This question would have seemed utterly idiotic until the last fifty, or at most a hundred, years, so convinced was everyone till then that beauty was the essential aim of art, so little had they observed that this assumption was in many ways contradicted by their own aesthetic experiences. They had not noticed that beauty was used by them about two quite different phenomena. The word 'beautiful' was, and still is, used to designate on the one hand aesthetic approval of a work of art and on the other certain kinds of natural objects, such as a beautiful woman, a beautiful horse. Now there are of course surprising differences of opinion as to what constitutes a beautiful woman or a beautiful horse, but there is I should say a greater consensus of opinion than about what constitutes a successful work of art. And I think we can say certain things about such natural beauty. First of all, taking the human face, symmetry is essential—to have one eye different from the other is at once destructive of beauty—and you notice that such symmetry is sure to

result from an average or compound photograph, since the departures of certain individuals from symmetry to one side of the face are pretty sure to be corrected by corresponding departures of other individuals on the other side.

We may also say that the curvature, the oval of the mask will be a continuous, unbroken and I think a geometrically simple curve, and this too is almost certain to result by average corrections of individual irregularities. And the same is true about the proportions of the features. So that our beautiful face is probably an average or normal face—a norm from which every individual departs more or less, but which we recognize as it were as lying behind all the individual departures. If we call this average an ideal of human beauty it sounds much more imposing, but I suspect it is really nothing but an average. That the Greeks had some suspicion of this may be guessed from the story of the sculptor who, having to do a statue of Venus, got all the most beautiful women of the city, i.e. those who were at once judged to be free from abnormalities, to come before him and proceeded to average them, taking a leg from one, an arm from another and so on. It is a method immediately destructive of what we call the character of a figure, and I need hardly remind you that in most modern art such character is the object of our special research. But the Greeks did not think of these compound photographs as averages, they projected them into a superhuman world and gave us the strange notion of the ‘human form divine’—a notion with which our culture is so deeply imbued that its strangeness does not strike us nor its pretension shock us as it would an Oriental mind which had never lost its imaginative grasp of the unity of nature and the relative insignificance of man.

These generalized types of humanity, then, were regarded by the Greeks as ideals of human nature, and it is curious that Plato, owing to his puritanical hatred of art, failed to see how well they might be made to fit in with his divine ideas, those ideas of which all actual things were the copies. But subsequent ages have seen this point, and Reynolds’s Discourses show how skilfully this notion may be exploited as the basis

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of an aesthetic. In these human types the Greeks also expressed their ideal of life, which implied the development of a healthy athletic body in balanced relation with mental and moral powers. The appreciation of such types of perfect human development was held to have almost a moral influence, and this led to the idea that whatever the artist represented must so far as possible have a noble and dignified character. How far this went you can see from the Minotaur (288). For the Minotaur stood in mythology for the utmost expression of brutality and lust. But the sculptor has not only humanized this, he has given it a certain suave nobility of bearing which utterly contradicts the theme. This notion that art should exclude by selection all those aspects of life which are repugnant to our sense of human values of course restricts its field very severely. All those expressive elements of the grotesque and ugly which play so large a part in most arts are left out almost entirely in Greek. Even when they deliberately aim at the comic and caricatural (289), their habit of generalized form and of a bland unaccented line, their ignorance of what makes individual character, prevents them from seizing on the significant accents, for lack of which mere exaggeration and distortion fail to amuse us.

We must now enquire further what is implied in this Greek pre-occupation with beautiful types. First of all, since they have to be generalized or average forms, they can only be arrived at by an external or descriptive attitude to a number of individuals. The method thus imposed is the exact opposite of the method by which we arrive at what we call the character of a figure or a pose. The artist who aims at character tries by a sort of intuitive grasp of the whole to feel some dominant rhythmic theme, or some dominant proportional relation of the parts, which controls and permeates the whole appearance. When he has successfully attained to this rhythmic idea and expressed it, his image has that quality of vitality, that illusion of expressing the inner life which we studied in a previous lecture; and we shall find that inner life almost entirely absent from Greek sculpture even when the figures are in violent movement. Moreover the intense intellectual energy of the

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Greeks made them desire not only to create beautiful types but to know all about the human body which preoccupied them so intensely. They succeeded in a thorough, methodical way in learning far more about the structure of the body than any other people of ancient times—indeed, only since the Renaissance has modern man pushed that exploration beyond the limits reached by the Greeks—and this methodical study of structure was an essential part of their attitude to art. They eliminated the results of lucky hits and chance successes, which to them was but a trivial sacrifice compared with the solid control that they gained. At each point the artist knew what he was aiming at and deliberately adapted his means to that end. We never meet in Greek art with those strange sports that we found in other arts. The Greek wished to have all his methods under deliberate and conscious control.

It was this, together with his speculative invention, that led him to conceive that the effects he aimed at might possibly be amenable to some kind of scientific statement, that harmony of proportions even in the human figure might be really the outcome of simple mathematical relations between the parts. Canons of proportion, which were to produce beauty inevitably as it were, were proposed by various artists, and the proportions of their architecture were certainly reduced to mathematical statement. The same is probably true of their more elaborate pottery (6). One can hardly doubt that pots which fit so exactly with a mathematical formula were deliberately made according to plan and if so we must, I think, suppose that they were moulded to a template.

And this use of a template brings us back abruptly to our main enquiry, the nature and value of sensibility in works of art. For you see that the Greeks were aiming at a kind of harmony which is inconsistent with sensibility. The potter's wheel inevitably abolished sensibility in the horizontal section of a pot but leaves it free in the galb or vertical section. But when once you put a template on to the galb sensibility will disappear from that also. Certainly whether they used a template or no, the Greek potters did manage to make the galb of their pots so



even and so simple in their curvature that they contrast violently with the acute sensibility expressed by Oriental potters (7).

Now in speaking of the mechanical perfection of some Egyptian works I attributed suppression of sensibility to the desire to produce objects of luxury; and no doubt part of the immense commercial success which Greek pots had in the ancient world was due to their mechanical perfection answering this demand. But I suspect that in Greek art these factors of luxury and craftsmanship are not the whole matter. There seems to be more than this behind the Greek elimination of sensibility—something which looks like a distinctive craving for harmonies based on geometry, a purposeful elimination of what I call vital as opposed to geometrical rhythms. I have suggested—it is only a speculative guess of mine—that what we call vital rhythms, those which come out through the unconscious functioning of the artist's sensibility, are rhythms so complex that they elude mathematical statement; that although they evidently have some kind of unity and consistency, this unity is so complex that it transcends geometry. But this is wild speculation. Meanwhile I wish someone would examine the galbs of Persian and Chinese pots and see whether they yield to geometric formulation as the Greek vases do.

Greek artists, then, had arrived at a fully developed consciousness of their function and they had elaborated a body of principles by which they sought methodically to achieve certain ends. And in the main these principles tended to establish numerical and geometrical constants and to eliminate as far as possible the expression of sensibility.

This question is, I think, of prime importance for us, because although the modern European tradition which we inherit always looks back to Greece as its fountain head, none the less the artist's sensibility has almost always played an immensely important part in modern art. Think, for instance, with what anxiety we peer into the texture of a picture to see whether Rembrandt's or Velasquez's handwriting can be clearly discerned and how disastrous it is to our feelings if we fail to find it. It is true that here and there we find sharp reactions against this

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attitude and there are moments when we have turned back to Greece with a more intent enquiry—the chief case is of course that of the Empire, of David and Canova, into which I hope sometime to go more fully. But anyhow there is this curious situation, namely that whilst Greek art has almost always been referred to as our standard of perfection, our practice has been totally opposed to its deliberate choice of mechanical and geometric precision.

We have seen plenty of instances of the suppression of sensibility due to love of skilled craftsmanship and of impressive propaganda, but I cannot doubt that something much more important lies behind the Greek attitude to art. Greek art was not produced, like Assyrian and to a great extent Egyptian art, to the order of a successful tyrant and with a view to advertisement—it was essentially a free and disinterested art, so that we are forced to look elsewhere to explain this strange phenomenon.

This is so important a part of our enquiry into the nature of works of art, and Greek art poses the question to us so insistently, that we must try to state it a little more clearly. For any great work of art there has to be some control of sensibility. The organization of the different parts into a single apprehensible whole requires a faculty analogous to that of the logical relation of terms in a syllogism. I have called this faculty sensual logic, by which I mean that sensibility in the narrow sense of the word, i.e. the expression of unconscious nervous reactions seen by the artist's actual handling and fashioning of the material, works within a frame fixed by the deliberate plan. In Indian art, as also in Minoan, we found this organizing power very weak—nearly everything was left to the workings of sensibility. In Chinese art we found both organizing power and sensibility balanced at a high tension. But we must not forget, when we thus oppose the organizing faculty and sensibility, that the organizing power, though it has a kind of likeness to logic, is not really intellectual: it too depends on feeling. In the Piero della Francesca Nativity, for instance (290), where we find a very high degree of organization, so that we grasp the composition at once, the unity of all

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the diverse forms is based on feelings of visual attraction. We can say that since the stable is a rectangle in a certain relation to the rectangle of the picture, the angels must form a rectangle in a special relation to the stable, the Virgin's robe must take a rectangular shape, etc. But all this is merely felt as giving satisfaction to the eye. We grasp it by instinctive non-intellectual apprehension of visual values. We call such a design lucid, clear and well arranged, just as we call an intellectual exposition lucid, clear and well arranged, but it is only by analogy that we can call it logical. We must beware then of calling the organizing faculty of the artist intellectual.

But what we find in Greek art is, I think, the desire to identify this organizing power with the intellect—to find geometric and mathematical constants for all these relations of the parts to one another; and we may suppose that the desire to realize as fully as possible these intellectually apprehended relations actually led them to suppress sensibility as an interference with that apprehension. Thus if, in a building, a wall surface is designed to have a simple mathematical relation with the base which supports it and the frieze which crowns it, we shall apprehend that relation more readily in proportion as the wall is a true flat surface—and indeed the Greeks took infinite pains to make the joints between the stones almost invisible.

Perhaps we may call this desire to emphasize in every way the mathematically simple relations a desire for perfection. I think this word will sum up a great deal of Greek aesthetics. Now this idea of perfection is essentially a negative one—the perfect thing is that which has no blemishes, nothing that can shock us by its irregularity. We may postulate perfection of a machine, since a machine might conceivably perform its intended function with the maximum of economy; but we cannot properly speak of perfection with regard to any living thing because there is no finality in life—we never know whither the processes of evolution and training are tending. What might have been called a perfect type of womanhood in 1850 would look like a fat dwarf beside the athletic beauty of to-day. There can be no perfection where there is

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continuous development. It seems, then, very doubtful whether the word 'perfect' can properly be applied to a work of art inasmuch as it is an expression of vital energy and in so far as it employs vital as opposed to geometric rhythms. We cannot, I think, admit perfection as an aesthetic ideal. It can only be used to describe a certain attitude or tendency affecting works of art. It is the tendency to insist on exact conformity to any given pattern. Perhaps a good example of this tendency is the attitude of eighteenth-century critics to verse forms. It was more important to them that each verse should exemplify the verse pattern clearly and completely than anything else. They were more shocked by any deviation from the norm than pleased by the variety such deviations might afford. Now at almost all other periods our attitude has been to enjoy verse forms more when they are not made too insistently evident. We get greater pleasure from variations on a theme than on the perpetual full statement of the theme. And indeed we may describe almost all works of art, including visual art, as variations on a theme—what pleases us most is to recognize the pattern under all its constantly changing disguises. But the Greek mind was more shocked than pleased by such variations. His intellectual bias led him to prefer that the theme should every time be perfectly explicit.

Thus when he puts a key pattern into a pot he likes to notice that each repetition is mechanically perfect (6), whereas when the Chinese uses the same pattern he likes each statement to have some subtle variation. You will note that the result of such mechanical precision in the rendering of forms removes them from the field of sensual contemplation. When once we have recognized the identity of each repeat we can no longer dwell on them—we sum them up as a series of  $1 + 1 + 1 + 1$ ; for wherever the intellect can handle in such a way the objects of experience it is bound to do so. Its conclusions impose themselves upon the mind, which cannot return to the vaguer state of sensual contemplation.

Now it appears to me that the importance of that sensual contemplative satisfaction which we call aesthetic experience lies in the fact that it belongs to two worlds: it deals with the infinite variety, complexity

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and concreteness of external nature, and it suggests the inevitability and orderliness of our intellectual life—suggests this but never can identify itself with it under penalty of becoming abstract and losing touch with the world of concrete things. So that in the end I think we must conclude that this Greek desire for perfection is not really an aesthetic urge, but is a trespass by the intellect into the province of aesthetic feeling. It is far more interesting and respectable than the elementary admiration of skilled craftsmanship to which we have traced what I call the luxury effect, but it is none the less due to a misunderstanding of the essential nature of aesthetic experience.

It is a curious fact about Greek art that, together with their intense desire to find simple mathematical relations for the parts of a single figure, or of a single object like a pot or a temple façade, and to make these relations as explicit as possible—together with this preoccupation there goes a singular inaptitude to pass beyond the limits of the entity in question. Thus when the pot has been made to conform exactly to a geometric scheme it is handed over to the painter, but the painter conceives his picture as a quite separate entity. Scarcely ever do we find that influence from the form of the pot passes over into the painter's design. He regards this empty surface of a pot simply as a place to tell his story by illustration (6).

Or, when the sculptor has to represent some dramatic theme in a relief, he proceeds to make one figure according to his canon of proportion and then a second and a third, but his idea of explicit relations stops within the limit of each single figure. He is incapable, apparently, of feeling their inter-relations, of giving to the whole complex any such inevitability of relations as he has conceived for each unit of the design. It would seem that the Greek artist concentrated his attention so exclusively on each unit that he never could bring them together into a larger, more comprehensive whole.

Thus in a frieze each figure appears to have been stuck on to the dead flat surface of the background (291). In almost all other arts the background of a frieze functions as a space in which the figure stands

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and this space unites the figures together, embracing them all; but the Greek mind cannot pass the barrier which the contour of the figure sets up. Here again the practice of Greek art is peculiar in contradistinction to that of almost all other arts. This peculiar limitation of the Greek artist's organizing power affects his draughtsmanship even more than his sculpture. The art of outline drawing, though it is the first art which we practise as children, is really one of the most difficult of all means of visual expression. It is really a very paradoxical affair. We are attracted by the contour of objects because the whole habit of life forces us to think in terms of separate objects, and this contour is the limiting edge of the object. But though it seems to us the most emphatic and positive fact about the object it is in reality the most elusive, the most difficult to ascertain and to state, being in fact the appearance not of an edge but of those planes which are so completely foreshortened that they are disappearing from vision round towards the other side of the object. Now all those artists who have felt most clearly the volume and plastic relief of the object and its relation to the background have in one way or another conveyed their sense of this in the quality of the outline. It is very difficult to define this, but it can perhaps best be suggested by saying that such artists feel always across the line rather than along it. They feel, that is to say, at each point in the line, the tension set up by the opposite contours, by means of which the solid volume is evoked, rather than the line regarded as a continuous movement along its own direction. The Greek draughtsman was prevented from giving this evocative power to his line by two things, first his incapacity to feel the relation of the object to its surroundings—his isolation of the object, and secondly by his desire for perfection, for an even continuity of curve regardless of what it expressed.

Now it is open to any one to prefer the elegant precision of the Greek line to the plastic power of the Chinese, only we must take note that all those who are revered as great draughtsmen, from Giotto down to Degas, with the possible exception of Albrecht Dürer, have followed the Chinese and not the Greek method.

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I fear I may have wearied you by this long examination of general principles, but it will facilitate our examination of particular works of art in which we shall notice either their recurrence, or the still more interesting and significant cases where these principles do not apply; for although Greek art may appear to us as a rather particularly consistent tradition, its history none the less has its crucial moments when alternative aesthetic ideals become apparent.

Let me sum up very briefly what appear to be the specific and peculiar characteristics of Greek art.

1. Of primary importance, its strong conceptual bias—the habit of seeing things always in terms of concepts, and the consequent difficulty in passing over the boundaries of concepts to create a larger unity.
2. Preoccupation with beautiful types—preference for generalized forms rather than personality and character.
3. Consequent on this a tendency to arrive at form by external descriptive means rather than by intuitive and integral apprehension, resulting in great difficulty in achieving consistent movement.
4. Desire for perfection showing itself in an attempt to identify the organization of design with intellectually apprehended constants, resulting in suppression of sensibility.

Now all these characteristics can I think be related to the intense intellectual energy of the Greeks. We have to recognize that there is an inevitable opposition between the analytic methods proper to the intellectual apprehension of the outer world and the intuitive apprehension which is employed by the artist. Classification of the totality of vision into concepts is the first step in the intellectual apprehension; and I think it is clear that it was the discovery or full development of conceptual language which put an end to the intense visual apprehension of palaeolithic man. The whole history of art since that great event may be said to be in some sort the age-long struggle to get rid of the distortions introduced into vision by conceptual language.

As we saw, Egyptian art was strictly bound by its conceptual basis and never did much to modify it. The Greeks were even more conceptual in

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proportion as they were more intellectual, but they did react against these limitations. They were even able to use their intellect to circumvent some of the distortions of conceptual vision, and it is this that lends special interest to their art. The story of Greek art is the story of a step-by-step discovery of the true nature of appearance by the liberation of vision from its conceptual bonds. It therefore appears as an almost inevitable sequence comparable to the sequence of scientific discovery, whereas we have seen very little trace of a similar progression in the arts we have studied hitherto.

My survey of Greek art, which will be very brief and summary, will be mainly from this point of view.

As I say, the early Greek artists went to school in Egypt, where of course they found already that conception of mathematically exact proportions which so strongly affected their work. The Egyptians no doubt were led to this by the practical necessities of their vast undertakings, but I suspect that in them too there was an intellectual bias in the same direction, though neither so strong nor so disinterested as that of the Greeks. This Egyptian influence was equally powerful in architecture and sculpture.

The contrast between Dar el Bahari (292) and Paestum (293) shows how the Greeks refined on and revised the Egyptian idea, giving it far greater exactitude and economy in all the relations. The Greeks carried the Egyptian idea, as it were, to its logical conclusion. Indeed, one might almost say that Doric architecture was still rather Egyptian than Greek. This aspect of Doric becomes vividly apparent at Syracuse, where a Doric temple has been incorporated into a building with Renaissance additions. If we use the word 'Classic' of Renaissance we can hardly call the Greek building by the same name, so violent is the contrast, so exotic and non-European does it appear beside the familiar forms of the Renaissance. This is not in the least to criticize Doric architecture, which seems to me at moments—and perhaps most of all at the moment when this temple of Neptune was conceived—one of the supreme achievements of Greek imagination.



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Compare again an Egyptian (294) and an archaic Greek statue (295) and you will see how closely the Greeks followed their Egyptian model. There is of course the same rigid frontality and symmetry, the same rigid pose of the arms. But there is one marked difference. The Greek artist is still far less familiar with the figure than the Egyptian and he is much more anxious to understand it intellectually and by an analytic process. He seeks to catalogue all the parts, to map out the limits of each. He wants to know exactly where the pectoral muscles end, where the salience of the ribs appears, the place of the iliac line, the structure of the knee-cap. Even the features are treated almost as separate objects.

The head is the sum of the separate concepts of the features—the nose, for instance, is defined as a separate object with a sharp edge where it is fixed on the mask. The eye is equally isolated by eye-lids which surround it completely on all sides; even the hair is felt to be as much a separate object as if it were a wig. It is a perfect example of that intense Greek passion to understand by analysis instead of grasping a whole by intuition.

This delimitation of the conceptual components of a figure is one result of the conceptual bias, but equally important is the frontal aspect—since we tend to associate with the conceptual words leg, hand, foot, etc., the aspects of these objects which has the widest lateral extension.

One of the most striking examples of that frontality is the pediment of the temple at Corfu. The central Gorgon is turned through a complete right angle at her waist—the head, arms and torso strict full face, the legs in strict profile. The panther (296) is equally strict in its frontality, though the effect is less striking.

The fact that the Greeks started from this intensely conceptual, analytic standpoint and that they only liberated themselves from it by slow degrees, means that the archaic period is tightly bound by these limitations. The great vogue which archaic Greek art has enjoyed for the last three or four decades is, I think, due to its relative novelty. To eyes grown tired by familiarity with the art of the later periods, it had an

appearance of freshness and surprise. It added, too, the pleasure in richer, more coloured decorative effects.

Such a work as this panther from Corfu, since we have not known it for very long, has still an air of something exotic and surprising. The fact that it is covered with circular spots gives it a kind of decorative colour such as we enjoy in Byzantine or early Gothic works of art but which we rarely get in Greek. But if we study it we note that it is executed in a very different spirit. Note the desire for mechanical evenness in all the lines, the lack of sensibility—though we must, I think, admit that the action of the head does give a suggestion of vital energy unusual in early Greek art. There is here no suggestion of Egyptian influence. There seem to have been other influences at work at this period, presumably Oriental, such as are very evident in the Rhodian pots (297)—where, by the bye, we find a greater idea of decorative unity of treatment than at any other period of Greek pottery.

In the early Attic statue (298), no doubt the general design may well be of Egyptian origin, but the type is very distinct and presumably original. Again we notice the rigid mechanical execution of the drapery.

In the head (299) from the three-headed monster of the Hekatompedon pediment on the Acropolis we get the bulging-eyed Attic type, deliberately exaggerated to make a monster of him. This again shows no Egyptian influence and seems to belong to an altogether peculiar traditional influence. We note that the dominant idea is rather the sphere than the cube. It also shows a curious, almost grotesque imagination which is quite unfamiliar in Greek art. It is evident that at this moment the preoccupation with physical beauty had not yet become universal.

With this archaic lion (300) we are at last on familiar ground. This belongs to the late sixth century, and the ideal of later archaic art is already evident. I assume that the authorities are justified in regarding this as genuine, though it is really rather hard to believe. It is appropriately enough in Berlin, and when one sees it there one can hardly help wondering whether it was not made for the Museum by a modern

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German sculptor, so exactly similar is it to modern German work in its mixture of hard schematic decoration with sentimental expressionism. It is singularly lacking in any imaginative grasp of plastic rhythms. Where it is not sharply outlined in wilfully schematic shapes, it is smoothed away into vague and meaningless surfaces. It is difficult to believe that this is not the outcome of a tired and sophisticated tradition striving for novelty of effect by schematic wilfulness—such an effect as we see so constantly today in so much mannered sculpture.

Berlin also prides itself on the possession of a South Italian figure of about 500 B.C. (301). Here too we note a somewhat similar quality. The rather slick elegance of all the forms, the over-sweetness of the expression and the tight precision and insensitiveness of the handling are all very disquieting—so much so, that when it first came to light some of the best authorities on Greek art violently protested that it was a forgery. Would that it had been!

To the early fifth century belongs the figure of a girl running, from Eleusis (302). It illustrates the Greek artist's attitude to movement. It is evidently arrived at by trying to analyse the visual impressions instead of conceiving movement by an intuitive process, and at this stage the result is that it fails altogether to give any feeling of movement. Notice again how the drapery, which is here more adapted to the figure, is treated with the same meticulous regularity and precision, in order to produce a decorative effect. At one point the sculptor has even tried to force the folds to make a kind of anthemion pattern—all of which is destructive of the idea of movement and of vitality. Everything becomes static and rigid.

This question of movement is very significant as an indication of the artist's method of approach, and it will be perhaps elucidated by comparing this with a French Romanesque sculpture (303)<sup>1</sup>. The comparison between late archaic Greek and Romanesque is very interesting because the two arts are so curiously similar. They represent almost identical

<sup>1</sup> R. F.'s notes give "Death of the Virgin, XIIth century"; it is uncertain whether the illustration given is the one he used.

moments in a parallel evolution, and as you must often have noticed the general idiom is strangely alike. In both the drapery has not yet become fully plastic and the folds are used as a decorative element. But you notice here that though the artist probably had nothing like as exact a knowledge of the human figure as his Greek counterpart, he has the power of giving to his figures complicated movements. And not only can he do this for one figure, but he can create a whole group with a common rhythmic idea running throughout; and these movements are directly expressive of states of mind—they are not arrived at by mere observation but by an intuitive comprehension. You will also notice that the folds of the drapery, though still mainly decorative, show a far greater sensibility. They are never mechanically exact but again result from an instinctive rhythmical feeling. If we turn back to the Greek relief (291) you will feel the contrast almost more clearly, because here we have a scene suggestive of more violent movement; and again the artist is not only unable to give to the group as a whole a consistent and permeating rhythm, but even the individual figures lack the consistency of a single rhythmic idea—we feel that each limb has been posed separately. Look also at the insensitive treatment of the drapery.

Since the rise of the taste for archaic Greek art, no statues have perhaps been more generally popular than the series of Korai of the Acropolis (304, 305), and there are plenty of reasons for this: they are extraordinarily brilliant in their execution, showing perfect control of the material, and they are portraits of the most celebrated beauties of the times. There is a note of mundanity, of chic, which is unmistakable. Though they were dedicated in a temple there is no trace of religious intention. They are simply fashionable portraits. It is, I think, clear that they are portraits of individual beauties, and it is interesting to see the individual character just making itself felt through the generalizing tendencies of Greek art. The idiosyncrasies of the individual face have been adapted, as far as possible, to the average or typical head of young womanhood. The modelling has no intimate expressive quality; the transitions are all smoothed out into an even and elementary curvature.

Though there is a general softening of the surface as compared with the other works we have seen, there is as yet very little evidence of sensibility in the modelling. These Korai illustrate a peculiarity of our present-day reactions to the archaic idiom. Had these fashionable statues been carried out with all the realism and morbidezza of later Greek art, we should almost certainly have felt some qualms about their excessive prettiness. We should have liked them with the reservation that the motive was too trivial for great art. But the formal symmetry of the pose, the austerity of the general lines and the schematic decoration all reassure us, since unconsciously we associate such an idiom with art devoted to great religious conceptions.

The Korai belong to the period just before the Persian invasion. And just at this period we have certain works of the Ionian school which are of peculiar interest because they suggest the existence of a very distinct aesthetic idea. The most important of these is the Siphnian Treasury at Delphi. Now this treasury strikes an unfamiliar note in Greek art. There is a frankness and bluntness in the use of the decorative mouldings which gives it an unusual quality, so to speak, of colour. The huge egg and dart moulding, unshadowed by the usual salient member, and the huge astragal moulding which runs round the base of the architrave and round the door opening behind, give the notion of a much freer, more imaginative, or at least more fanciful, use of ornament—of something in which the element of surprise is not so studiously avoided as in most Classical buildings. The pediment is, of course, a complete failure. The tiny figures like marionettes in a peep-show have no possible meaning, nor can one altogether admire the frieze on the architrave, though its general colour effect is well judged. But again, in the Caryatids (306, 307) there is quite unusual energy and character, something more vital even in the movement in spite of its rigid frontality. No doubt something of the effect of strangeness here is due to the condition, but I think that apart from that there is a greater sense of character than in most of the work of this time. And this is due to the sensibility of the modelling.

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Two of the Siphnian friezes, namely those on the sides of the building, are also very peculiar in Greek art (308). First of all the composition shows a very unusual power of relating the figures to one another to build up consistent groups; then the action is far more vivid and expressive than usual. But even more extraordinary is the sense the artist shows of recession. There is here (quite exceptionally) a distinct feeling of the relation of the figures to the space in which they evolve. We must suppose these Ionian sculptors to have felt much more intuitively, to have been able to pass outside the limits of the concept.

As you know, the Persians destroyed this great Ionian civilization. We owe to it some of the greatest achievements of the Greek spirit in poetry and philosophy, and I cannot help thinking that if the same culture had continued its tradition unbroken the history of later Greek art might have been very different, and that the destruction of the Ionian cities was one of the great tragedies of history.

However, this is mere guesswork. The art of Sicily at about this time also shows an unusual sense of design and one or two of the metopes of the temple at Selinus seem to me among the finest of all such compositions in Greek art. In some of them, it is true, there is little sense of interrelation, but that of Hera and Zeus (309) I think succeeds in giving a real sense of life in the movement of the figures, and is a curiously felicitous composition. The strong upright of the drapery falling from Hera's left arm, an upright which is deliberately accentuated by the deep shadows, is placed at exactly the right interval to enable the crowned figure of Zeus to balance the upright figure of Hera. There is also a delightful freedom in the handling and real sensibility in the treatment of the folds.

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We come now to what used to be regarded as the great period—the golden age of Greek art—the moment when all archaic traits have ceased. I think, by the bye, that we may distinguish this change by noting the fact that it is the moment when the plastic unity is established. Archaism is marked not so much by any imperfect understanding of structure as by the use of detail, of accessories such as hair and drapery as an excuse for decoration. These things are kept as it were outside the plastic sequence. When that sequence permeates all these accessories we cease to have both the peculiar satisfactions of an archaic style and its drawbacks.

The first great monument of this period of transition from an archaic to a complete style is the decoration of the temple of Zeus at Olympia. The sculptor of these pediments and metopes has achieved a new freedom in the movement of his figures, although the tendency to frontality of aspect is still evident at times. He has also discovered a curious method of rounding off the transitions from one plane to another while holding firmly to the main structural units of the figure. In these metopes you see the dominance of frontality rather markedly; the individual figures are clearly realized in their essential structural forms. But the drapery is more plastic. There is none of the tight, decorative pattern-work of the folds which we saw in the archaic. Nor are the muscles used as patterns. There is much less tight precision everywhere, but on the other hand the absence of this tight patterned linear treatment has left the modelling rather shapeless in its bland rounding off of every form. There are no accents to mark the divisions of planes; even the Heracles who is supporting the world shows no trace of inner tension. Nor again is there any rhythmic idea uniting one figure with another, nor, in spite of the full relief, any suggestion of spatial relations. In the metope of Heracles cleaning the Augean stables (310) there is the

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same curious want of composition, of balance, of direction. Even if we complete the movement it is strange to note how no attempt has been made to unite the rigid perpendicular of the goddess with the diagonal system; her extended arm even increases the difficulty. It would have been well within the resources of this sculptor to establish some diagonals in the figure of Athena, and one notes once more how little it occurred to the Greek mind to consider a more extended whole than the single figure. This is the more remarkable in view of the thorough exploration of appearance of the single figure which they had already undertaken. The movement of the Heracles is admirably observed and perfectly consistent, only again the sense of tension of the spirit is strangely absent. In this relief, however (311), where the artist has been able to envisage the scene as that of a single sculptural group, we get a real composition—in some ways the most satisfactory of any such metope compositions that I know. For here the crossing diagonals of the man and bull and the double reverted heads produce an admirably balanced system. Notice again the extraordinarily even, bland, unaccented roundness of the modelling with no sense of the division of planes.

The sculptures of this temple are devoted to scenes of violent strife in the fight of the Centaurs and Lapiths. On one of the pediments the combatants bite and tear each other, and yet nowhere does the slow tempo of the movements change, no ripple disturbs the bland equanimity of the modelling, its denial of all inner tension either of mind or muscle. It is undeniable that this has a peculiar effect on the imagination. What we describe as an Olympian calm certainly emanates from these figures on whom the violence of strife leaves no mark. Indeed, they might be supposed to exemplify in an extreme degree Winckelmann's idea that sculpture is essentially a static art. But if the Greeks had really thought thus would they not instinctively have avoided scenes like that where a Centaur is vigorously chewing the arm of a Lapith (312)? Why set up this vehement contrast between the theme and its treatment? It certainly seems strange that the men who listened to Æschylus's tremendous dramas should have treated even more violent



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themes with this imperturbable suavity. Nor do I think there is any truth in the theory that sculpture is in some special way debarred from dramatic expression. There is far more dramatic tension in the two figures of St Damian and St Cosmas by Donatello (25), though there is no violence of gesture whatever, than in the Olympia pediments. The moment that the idea of character, based upon the feeling for vital rhythms, replaces the idea of the type, dramatic expression follows. Nor do I think that such an idea as that of the static quality of sculpture, whether right or wrong, was likely to arise at such an early period as this. It is an idea that belongs to a complicated and self-conscious period of culture. Moreover, there is distinct evidence that the sculptor of the Olympian figures was really intent on his story; that he meant to convey its dramatic intensity. In the forehead of the Lapith, who appears so entirely unmoved, he has made two rather elegantly curved grooves—and this is evidently meant to mark the anguish he must feel. Similarly the ferocity of the Centaur is expressed by a series of wrinkles round the brows. It was not then that he did not want to tell the story dramatically, but that he could only achieve it by such external and as it were conceptual images. The generalizing bias of Greek art prevented that intuitive sense of character which alone could achieve such an end.

Nor had he evidently any notion that mood might also be conveyed by the general quality of the texture of his plastic transitions. How extraordinarily bland and almost pasty the plastic texture is you can judge from the detail of hand or foot. The forms seem almost as though they were made in a paste and squeezed out of a mould. In details of drapery the special quality of this artist's rhythms is very evident. You see also that he has not quite freed himself from archaism; that the folds do not share completely in the plastic movement, but remain more or less as linear decorations of the surface.

We have in later times an artist who is curiously akin in some ways to this Olympian sculptor, namely Piero della Francesca. In at least two frescoes Piero depicted battle scenes, though one guesses that he accepted the theme rather of necessity than choice. The scenes show a

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conflict, curiously similar to that on the Olympian pediment, between the vehemence of the theme and the stately, slow-moving rhythms; and in drawing the figure Piero's contours have something of the same large gentle curves, the same almost exaggerated simplification and bluntness. All the same the fundamental difference between Greek and modern art is felt through the likeness. Piero's figures arouse a profound sense of character; they are instinct with the tension of the inner life of which no trace is seen at Olympia.

The Ludovisi throne belongs to nearly the same moment of transition as the Olympia sculptures, and has the same suave rounded quality of relief. I do not wish to deny its extraordinary charm, but I wish I could feel it as acutely as I once did. There is a peculiar sweetness in the rhythm of the contours, especially in this figure (313), but I confess that I become increasingly critical of the quality of the modelling. The planes within the contours are not felt with anything like the same subtlety as the contours themselves. There is no evidence of any feeling for planes; the simplicity is without fullness of content. The thighs of this fluteplayer are hardly distinguishable from the mere inflated roundness of the cushion on which she is sitting. It is as though the skin were inflated or stretched over a uniformly elastic substance. There is all the difference between such a schematic simplification and the simplicity which comes as the last word of compression of the infinite richness and complexity of nature.

A statuette of Maillol's (314) gives us, I think, a curiously apposite comparison. Its general effect is one of great simplicity, but we cannot ever treat the actual surface as an unbroken passage from one point to another; at every moment we feel a subtle variation in the movement of the surface. It has the fullness and density of nature, interpreted according to a single rhythmic idea incessantly varied. This is sensibility in a high degree.

This bronze figure of Zeus (315), which belongs perhaps to a slightly earlier period, is an extraordinary example of the Greek method. One would say that the artist had conceived it without any

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sense of the idiom of plastic art. From the point of view of plastic unity the human figure has one great disadvantage, its likeness—to put it brutally—to a star-fish: the way in which its limbs are capable of leading the eye away from the general mass. Almost all great sculptors feel this intensely and take infinite pains to achieve some compression or to give to the limbs such direction that they suggest lines of movement returning to the centre. Such a total denial of plastic unity as this is very rare. And the sculptor who did this had an extraordinary knowledge of the figure. It is a *tour de force* from that point of view. The articulations are rendered with surprising naturalism; indeed one must suppose that literal imitation was here the artist's main purpose.

With Myron all trace of archaism disappears. Unfortunately we have no original work by him, and it is only lately that some idea of his character as an artist has begun to take shape from the putting together of copies and replicas of works which can plausibly be attributed to him from the literary tradition which has survived. And he is of singular moment for our enquiry. It was said of him by Petronius Arbiter that he almost turned living men into bronze; by another writer that he imprisoned men in bronze. It is evident that to the ancient world he already appeared as in some way exceptional. And certainly his statue of the youthful Athena (316) is singularly unlike almost all other Greek sculptures. It is true that this is only a copy—the original was in bronze. But it is, I think, a good deal better than most copies, vastly better than the surviving copies of the Marsyas which was part of the same group. What strikes me about this is first that it is not a generalized type. It has the uniqueness of personality. It is not an averaged or idealized head. The other thing is that the movement is not a construction arrived at from outside. It is not a description of a movement. It has character, that is to say, it gives us the vivid apprehension that the movement is the externalization of a state of mind. It has vital rhythms. It is far too complex to be as it were the rhetorical symbol of a mood. As a matter of fact, the Marsyas which you all know well is, as it has come down to us, a more or less rhetorical symbol of surprise, and has nothing

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of this subtle complexity. In fact I know no other Greek work which gives me quite the sensation of personality and vitality that this does, though something of the same feeling appears in related works like the head of Athena at Bologna.

We come now to what has for long been regarded as the climax of Greek art, namely the sculptures of the Parthenon which are connected with Pheidias, in what precise way we do not know, though there is some probability that his was the inspiring and creative force behind the specific style of those works. It is evident, however, that many hands took part in the work and there are large differences of quality in different parts of the frieze. But at least in the work of the pediments it seems to me that there is evidence of a great and remarkable artist, and it is not of any consequence for our purpose that we have no name for him. In the Parthenon as a whole I think the essential qualities of Greek art, its research for beauty in the human body, its conception of a harmonious and balanced life, of dignity and nobility in character come to supreme expression.

Such a figure as the 'Theseus' (317) is clearly a type figure. It has nothing of the personality of Myron's Athena. It is completely generalized. But the unknown creator's feeling for rhythm has enabled him to conceive a perfectly free and natural pose. The movement has an extraordinary ease and there is a profound feeling for plastic unity, for rhythmical transitions and oppositions of planes. Though the forms are very much simplified, the simplification is neither so extreme nor so wilful as in the Olympian sculptures. There is far more subtlety and variety in the curvatures, and though the artist still clings to an almost logical exposition of the main divisions of the body, as for instance where the thorax articulates with the stomach and the stomach with the thighs, this no longer appears as a schematic abstract; it is filled out with a far more penetrating sense of the minor modulations within the different areas which he has marked out. Indeed, it is at this point that Greek art really achieves some liberation from its limiting conceptualism and here at last it allows sensibility to come in. These artists have abandoned the

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obsession of mechanical exactitude—the unconscious rhythmical play of the sculptor's hand finds an outlet.

You will see this more clearly from the 'Iris' (318). Nothing could be more vigorously grasped than the main plastic relations of the torso, but upon that firm structure the artist has allowed his sensibility to mark his delighted apprehension of the fluctuating movement of the minuter relations. There is nothing static or arrested here—it has the palpitating mobility of real flesh. And the drapery plays across these sequences of plane a delightfully free and ever varying counterpoint.

It is in the group of the Fates (319) that we get a clearer idea than anywhere of the greatness of this master of plastic imagination. I certainly know of no other sculpture of this period which has anything like the variety, richness and continuity of these plastic sequences. This cataract of planes varying at every moment, perpetually flowing and changing as it flows, and yet always held in a simple long-drawn phrase, is superbly conceived. And the effect of this movement is heightened by the surprise which we get from the sharp recession where the legs of the left-hand figure are drawn up beneath the projecting ledge of the knees. There is no trace left here of frontality. Movement is equally free in any direction, and this freedom is used with a consummate grasp of the plastic implications of opposition and balance between the limbs. These figures comprise a single group, and within that group the rhythmic flow is unbroken, infinitely varied and yet superbly sustained. Here at last that sensibility which the archaic artists suppressed breaks through in every modulation of the surface.

We have seen with what difficulty the Greek artist felt a unity beyond the limits of the single figure. Here at last he has done so for a group of three figures and with supreme success, but I much doubt whether even the Parthenon master could go beyond this. No reconstruction of the pediment sculptures as a whole which I have seen makes evident any continuous compositional theme. And when we turn to the metopes, executed by other hands, the absence of any rhythmic unity of the figures is often painfully evident. No doubt the story is well enough told,

but I cannot find evidence of any single rhythmical theme which could unite these figures, or any balanced feeling for composition in the picture space. The artist's feeling is concentrated on each figure separately. He has never felt them as a plastic unity, still less a plastic and spatial one. One sees this particularly well in this metope of Lapith and Centaur (26), where there is a terrible rectangular hole in the middle and an awkward crossing of the Lapith's leg at right angles with the Centaur's body.

The frieze seems to me in general conceived in a much less intense vein. It is picturesquely descriptive with a tendency to fall back on decorative rather than plastic values. The whole frieze produces indeed the effect of a picture of a festival day of the city life, over which the Greek habit of generalizing throws a veil of serene and dreamy unreality. The processions move along with a trance-like vagueness and nonchalance, building up here and there beautiful sequences of gesture and pose, and the slight variations of pose follow one another with a musical effect. But the vision is essentially descriptive and external. There is hardly any plastic feeling for the action. Indeed, the structure throughout is sacrificed to the decorative pattern, given by the folds of the drapery. In the group of seated gods, though the changes of pose are beautifully used in the sequence, there is no nervous intensity, it is a superficial picturesqueness, and here even more the drapery, though it makes a pretence of being moulded to the figure, counts mainly as pattern and has very little plastic significance. However, one ought perhaps to admit that the sculptors of the relief conceived it mainly as a linear drawing of the forms. We see everywhere that they relied more on small shadows cast by minute details of wrinkle or fold, or by the salience of an ankle-bone, than on the relation of structural planes. Their style is essentially descriptive and picturesque rather than plastic.

This relief from the temple of Nike (320) must belong to the same circle as the work of the Parthenon. I should even guess that it might be by the sculptor of the pediment. It is indeed one of the finest of all these

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works. As it was a relief, the sculptor had to translate movements in depth into perspective recessions; but see with what surprising sureness he has evoked the full sense of the volume, how vividly we feel the distance back to the right shoulder. The unity of the design is wonderfully secured by the folds of the drapery. Here is the exact opposite of the bronze Zeus, for every direction is brought back to the centre. In the drapery the design is almost finer than in the Parthenon; the intervals between the folds are more subtly related and there is an even greater sensibility in the handling.

Another lovely work of the fifth century is this little bronze figure of a girl (321). It is beautifully firm and compact in design, dense and full of substance in its modelling, and the turning movement of the head and shoulders upon the thighs is felt as a simple consistent pose. The Venus of Cyrene in the Terme Museum at Rome (322) is, I suppose, a little later in the fifth century. It is, I think, one of the finest of all, though this photograph does not do it justice—as it flattens many of the planes. It is of course difficult to say without the arms what exactly the pose was in its entirety, but the rhythmic theme, so far as we have it, is unusual in Greek art in its long-drawn continuity of phrase. It suggests those more complicated, pensive and mysterious moods which belong to the modern world and to which Renaissance artists like Botticelli gave such poignant expression.

I have chosen from the considerable mass of fifth-century design those which appear to me to have the greatest plastic significance. I am very far from thinking, as is so often assumed, that 'fifth-century Greek' is equivalent to the highest possible commendation, for though everything original of this period has a certain charm in its firm and yet atmospheric handling, a great deal of it is lacking in any creative vision.

I hope my attempt to revise from a fresh point of view our estimate of earlier Greek art will not have seemed to you entirely negative in its results. You see that to some extent the Greeks did learn to overcome the great handicap imposed by their rigidly conceptual outlook. Nor do I doubt that the laborious and methodical exploration of the

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structure of the human figure was of great value for our later European tradition. The fact that we have been able to use that knowledge with far greater freedom, and have moreover put it to higher imaginative purpose than they ever conceived, does not prevent our recognition of the pioneer work they accomplished.

## LATER GREEK, HELLENISTIC AND ROMAN

The golden age of Athens, which saw the erection and decoration of the Parthenon and Erechtheum, lasted only for the short interval between the Persian and Peloponnesian wars, about half a century. With the failure of the Athenian democratic adventure Greek history loses much of its glamour, and people have been inclined to see nothing but a gradual decline in the art of the succeeding periods. Perhaps our enquiry may lead us to modify such a view. No doubt it was the end of the heroic age, during which the sculptor's chief interest was the physique of the perfectly developed male athlete. In the fourth century the female form was much more thoroughly studied and became more and more the chief subject of sculpture. The fourth century is dominated by three great names, Praxiteles, Skopas and Lysippus. All of these develop the ideas of the fifth century towards a freer sense of movement and a blurring of the plastic transitions—this rather as an attempt to indicate the softness of flesh than a true development of plastic sensibility.

But in the Hellenistic period which follows after the conquests of Alexander there occur definite changes in style, some of which are of interest for us. First of all we note that the continued study of the female figure tends to produce more continuous and consistent plastic rhythms (323). The male figure lent itself readily enough to the system of strongly articulated plastic phrases, clearly distinguished from each other by the edge of the pectoral muscles and the iliac line. But in the female figure the transitions are continuous. The result of this was, I think, a heightening of the plastic sensibility in these later artists, a



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clearer understanding of what are the possibilities of plastic expression. The poses become freer, with a greater sense of the balance of opposing inclinations of planes, and at times the sculptors became aware of the possibilities of chiaroscuro—they discovered the baroque.

The Attalids in Asia Minor were one of the contending dynasties among which Alexander's empire had been divided. They were rather Asiatic tyrants than the heads of a free Greek state, but they were great patrons of art and it was under them that some of the most interesting new developments took place. The altar, dedicated to Zeus in 180 B.C., is the most striking evidence of that new feeling. Students of Greek art having once fixed on the Parthenon sculptures as the high-water mark of Greek art found in the Pergamene works a conveniently striking contrast. They have been used constantly as proof of the decadence of Greek art, and this could be agreeably enough correlated with the loss of political independence. The Pergamenes were accused of vulgar realism and forced exaggeration in contrast to the serene calm and dignity of the Olympian and Parthenon figures (324). But if the theme chosen is one of conflict (here the battle of the gods with the Titans) there is nothing reprehensible in allowing the design to be expressive of conflict rather than suggestive of repose. The theme may indeed inspire another kind of rhythmic idea, and that not necessarily an inferior one. And here we see that it led to certain very striking results. Almost for the first time in Greek sculpture a plastic rhythm has been set up strong enough to bring the individual figures into close relation with each other so that they fuse into a single plastic unity. I do not pretend that this is an impeccable composition. The modern world has pushed the study of rhythm so much further than the ancient that we have a higher standard. This would not have satisfied Raphael or Poussin, but at least it shows an awareness of the need to establish systems of correspondence and balance throughout the whole design. This complex group is far more closely knit than were any of the two figures in the metopes of the Parthenon, and it was a great step thus to extend the unity beyond the single figure. And in the execution the artist has used

light and shade consciously and deliberately. He does not carve the actual forms as we know them to be; rather he carves stone so that the effect of light and shade which he produces will suggest the forms without necessarily describing them in full. Here all the sculptor has bothered about are the shapes made by his shadows (24). In the mouth the important thing is the shape of the shadow cast on the lower lip, and to give that its full effect he will cut deep into the upper lip and cheek regardless of the actual forms, which will anyhow be drowned in shadow. Nor does he try to establish a clear continuous contour to the head or to the mask. He allows deep shadows to break through. In fact, this is a definite breakaway from the dominance of conceptual imagery. It is a much further adventure into the world of appearance than any hitherto attempted.

But this is not the only contribution of the Pergamene artists. Strangely enough though they cut stone so as to give an effect of *chiaroscuro* they were none the less far more conscious than previous masters of its function in the architectural whole. This continuous band of reliefs makes a splendidly rich base for the superstructure (325). You can guess that the artist thought in terms of the whole building by the extreme salience of the moulding above. This throws a shade over his relief which makes it into a single architectural unit. It plays its part as a colour contrast to the base below and the colonnade above, giving by its rather confused richness a peculiar value to the lucidity and elegance of the Ionic columns. I do not see elsewhere in classic art so clear a consciousness of all the relations of parts to a complex whole. One may well admit that from the point of view of illustration, of what the imagery means, of the types chosen and so forth, this has not the noble serenity of the early imagery: but this is literature and lies outside our enquiry. If we confine ourselves to purely plastic values I think we must admit that it marks a great advance.

Something of this baroque impressionism is seen again in a head by Damophon about this date, where the forms are suggested by light and shade rather than actually carved, where the modelling of the mask is

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carried through without a break into the flowing plastic sequences of the hair.

The Victory of Samothrace (326) is not so markedly baroque in its use of light and shade, since the treatment of the drapery reverts rather to Pheidias, but none the less there is a greater feeling for the value of shadows and in other respects it expresses the new plastic conceptions of Hellenism. Not only is the movement more vividly felt in all its complexity and variety but there is a far greater grasp of a continuous rhythmic phrase permeating the whole. The composition is extraordinarily moving, with its felicitous contrast of the inclination of the shoulders and breasts to one side, balanced by an opposing inclination of the pelvis. And in the drapery the artist has massed his minutely varied folds in a sequence of larger divisions which enable us to grasp the whole design instantly. It is really rather meaningless to talk of the decadence of Greek art at a time when sculptors were thus discovering new and more expressive sculptural themes, and in fact even the knowledge of its late date has never been able to check the hold of this statue on people's imaginations. For indeed it is one of the most moving conceptions of Greek art, this of the goddess alighting in full flight on the prow of the advancing ship with her drapery pressed in fluttering folds against her body. I have a notion that in order to realize the artist's conception fully it should be set up as though leaning forward more against the wind.

The Rhodian school of this period, so far as we can judge it from the Farnese bull (327), seems not to have accepted the new baroque feeling. In this work there is a lamentable want of feeling for light and shade, the forms are everywhere carved as they are in fact and not as they appear. It is only Hellenistic in the sense that the artist is at least trying to establish a rhythmic continuity between the figures, though I confess I have never been able to see that he has succeeded.

A far better example of this is the once so overpraised and now perhaps too much despised Laocoon. It is undoubtedly over-emphatic and rhetorical in its expression of horror, but it is none the less a very re-

markable effort to hold together a terribly complicated series of plastic movements in a single rhythmic sequence. The felicity of some of its main phrases is rather marred and its meaning obscured by the over-accentuated handling of detail.

If we may believe literary tradition, the great age of Greek painting was the fourth century as represented by Zeuxis and Apelles, but we can form very little idea of what their pictures were like. One monument of the early Hellenistic age survives however in a mosaic copy, and gives us almost the only real clue to classic painting (328). Far more than sculpture, painting demands a vivid sense of the relations of figures one to another and of their relation to the picture space, and we have seen all along how slow the Greek artists were to realize any relations going beyond the individual figure. From this we see that Greek artists had arrived at an understanding of the perspective foreshortening of individual figures—for example, the man and horse in the centre—but there is very little understanding of pictorial space. The figures are really imagined as spread in profile across a rather narrow stage. The one figure which contradicts this general law of frontality is so unfortunately placed that it blocks the diagonal movement suggested by the horses of Darius, which might have given some unity to the composition. Nor has the artist any grasp of chiaroscuro; everywhere there is the same clear delineation of detail; there is no attempt to group passages together by enveloping shadows, there is no system of subordination, without which so crowded a design can hardly be held into any sort of intelligible unity. It is a more or less successful dramatic illustration by means of rather conventional and rhetorical symbols. There is also an emphasis on trivial pieces of realism, like the carefully exposed reflection of the fallen soldier in the retina of his shield, which is very much in agreement with the puerile stories of *trompe-d'œil*—like that of the 'Grapes of Zeuxis'—which were the stock in trade of art critics like Pliny.

One other picture probably belongs to Hellenistic art—the once so celebrated Aldobrandini marriage (329). We notice that with the

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narrow stage and the figures arranged frontally along it, the indications of space in the background are very superficial; and although the artist apparently intended to break this elementary frontality by placing the bed diagonally, he failed to put the two seated figures in perspective—they come forward and do not appear to be sitting on the bed at all. There is some attempt to create variety by a pyramidal centre, but this is weakened by the too great parallelism of the seated figures, and the effect is still further weakened by the close repetition given by the figure leaning on a column. There is some evidence of a feeling for interval, far more than in most of the paintings in Pompeii, but how relatively weak the Greek feeling for such relations was can be seen by comparing this with a painting by Poussin almost certainly based on it (330). For we know that Poussin—whose reverence for Classical art prevented his ever looking with a critical eye—that Poussin copied this work.

Poussin very frequently adopted the narrow stage of Classical painting, but his far greater sense of spatial design, his infinitely finer sensibility to the significance of interval and his invention of divisions in the background give to his work immensely greater unity and variety. It shows how much further modern art has progressed than anything we can deduce from Greek painting in the apprehension of plastic relations. The Hellenistic period shows a great change in the artist's attitude to life. Greek art was never, even in the fifth century, quite so restricted to religious and heroic themes as is commonly supposed. We have already seen in the Korae of the Acropolis the portraits of fashionable beauties, and the Tanagra statuettes were usually taken from everyday life. But in the Hellenistic period genre themes are treated on a bigger scale and more seriously. Such statues as the boy struggling with a goose, the girl shielding her dove from a snake, the girl playing knucklebones, which still have a sort of picture postcard reputation, date from this period. It was in Alexandria that this kind of art was most cultivated, and the statuette of a Nubian street singer (331) shows what good plastic themes could be inspired by this more direct approach to actual life. It is extraordinarily free in its movement, and the complicated changes of

direction are beautifully contrasted and balanced and kept together in continuous sweeping but subtly restrained rhythmic phrase. It seems indeed like an anticipation of the Renaissance, but that the surface treatment lacks the full sensibility of the Italian masters. But what is noteworthy here is that these Hellenistic sculptors had begun to realize the possibilities of actual visual experiences, for this is really *seen* and not put together according to some schematic idea of the human body. This would inevitably lead to the notion of character as opposed to generalized types.

Naturally enough with this wider interest in actual life the portrait began to be an important theme. But the Greek habit of generalization, together with their notion of nobility, gave very little chance of their achieving character and personality. Here, for instance, though one guesses that Demosthenes had a strikingly individual face, there is nothing vital about the rhythms nor characterful about the pose (332). It is a generalized symbol of an orator and one could change the head for another one without any danger of destroying such unity as there is.

Two portraits, however, stand out from the long series of conventional and lifeless portraiture which later Greek art has bequeathed to us, and both are so singular that it is difficult to imagine how they can have arisen or what affinities they may have with other works. This of Euthydemus (333), a man who usurped the Bactrian throne in 230 B.C., is a piece of pure rather crude realism, but it is not purely imitative and photographic, so to speak, as the Roman portraits were. It is an interpretation of forms in the sense of character, though of a crude and superficial kind and with an expressionist emphasis. This other of Arsinoe (334), Queen of Egypt about 200 B.C., is very different. Here the artist has not created verisimilitude by descriptive details—the vivid sense of inner life comes from the movement of the head on the neck, of which he has felt the significance for character. This sense of individuality and character comes out from the main plastic relations and the sensitive modelling of the surface. This sudden emergence of an artist who feels character is as strange and inexplicable as the similar case of Myron.

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Undoubtedly the art of Hellenistic culture was subject to a new menace. The immense extension of trade and commerce which followed on Alexander's conquests brought into existence a new social class, that of the self-made man, the parvenu, and a good deal of the art was made to gratify the vulgar taste and puerile intelligence which such people nearly always show. Probably Alexandria already foreshadowed the vulgarity of Rome and of our own industrial civilization.

None the less it was an age of growth and experiment in art, and it did not really decline until the Roman conquest of the Eastern Mediterranean. The Romans not only had no artistic tradition of their own; they had an avowed contempt for art. None the less the prestige of works of art in the ancient world was too great for them to ignore it altogether, and they signalized their conquest of Greece by wholesale plunder of statues. Thereupon there grew up among the Roman gentry a snobbish taste for Greek art which a Roman firm, the Cometii, turned to account by setting up factories throughout Greece wherever marble was available, and hiring Greek journeymen sculptors to turn out innumerable statues for the Roman market. When we reflect upon the low level of the great mass of Greco-Roman sculpture we must remember how much of it is of this purely commercial origin.

But though Rome had no tradition of her own, there existed an artistic tradition on Italian soil, that of her former enemies the Etruscans. And this demands a short enquiry. The Etruscans had brought with them from Asia Minor an art based on Mesopotamian traditions, but when they began importing Greek pottery, the Greek style began to be followed. The fact that they thus lived on borrowed art and created no distinctive style of their own suggests that they lacked any distinctive creative impulse. None the less they inevitably gave a special flavour to the style which they adopted.

This wall painting (335) is based entirely on Greek vase painting, but whilst it lacks the knowledge of the figure and the mechanical precision and finish of the Greek painters it shows a much closer contact with life. There is a real feeling for the significance of gesture, a sense of move-

ment and life, of something actually going on here, which is altogether wanting in the frozen perfection of the best Greek vases. We notice also a greater sense of spacing, a more continuous rhythm, and a better sense of how to fill the space by various decorative devices. It is, I think, certain that the Etruscans never gave to art that methodical and concentrated attention which the Greeks did—that they lacked the intense artistic consciousness of the Greeks, but they had certain instinctive aptitudes which the Greeks either lacked or which were suppressed by their passion for geometric harmony.

This strange and ungracious conception of Apollo for instance (336), in which, as you see, everything is borrowed from archaic Greek originals, has none the less a certain ungainly energy and vitality. There is no evidence of that preoccupation with a balanced and perfectly understood pose, still less with the Greek notion of a noble serenity and calm—Apollo trudges along exactly as the artist had seen one of his contemporaries. And in his head (337) there is the same aggressive and crude vehemence of accent, which makes the archaic smile a grim caricature. But what sensibility the artist possessed has not been polished and obliterated, as it was in most Greek work, where you will look in vain for any such expressive accents of modelling as you find here. Clearly if we judge of art by the kind of life which it suggests to us, by its moral elevation or nobility of sentiment, all Etruscan art must be condemned; but we are not concerned with such high matters in the present enquiry and we have to note the evidences of vitality and sensibility which transpire even through the crudities of Etruscan works.

This comes out still more strikingly in the portraits of the dead which were represented lying upon the lids of their tombs (338). Here the Etruscan artists got much freer from the Greek originals. They were interested directly in their own visual experiences and the result is something quite specific and original. For what strikes us here is that although the artist has simplified his forms according to a schematic idea which he has taken from Greece there is nothing of the Greek generalization. These are not ideal or average heads, but in each case



the schematic treatment is adapted so as to bring out and interpret the individual character; and by a strange device, which shows that the artist had looked with an almost impressionist vision, he gives to the eyes the illusion of a real regard. And these are not abstract gestures, symbolic of certain moral states, but the odd spontaneous gestures of living people. It would be absurd to exaggerate too much the importance of the rather inchoate and imperfect art which Etruria has left to us, but we must note in passing the evidences of a tendency which was so rare in the Mediterranean art of this period: nor was it, I think, without some influence on the course of the European tradition. Something indeed of this Etruscan feeling for individual character must, one thinks, have had its effect on Roman art, for it is only in portraiture that Rome struck any distinctive note.

There is nothing in art-history quite like the artistic indigence of early Roman culture, unless it be the first century of the United States. And Rome affords the one great culture of early times of which we can, I think, say that the loss of all her artistic creations would make scarcely any appreciable difference to our aesthetic inheritance. The attempts which have been made to give to Rome an important position in the evolution of art seem to me to break down before the works themselves. Some of course attain to a certain decorative elegance which is comparable to that of the minor artists and craftsmen of the Renaissance, but even this relatively low standard is rarely reached, and we search in vain for a single work which shows anything like a profound plastic imagination.

There is, as I say, practically nothing to show for the centuries during which Rome built up her world-wide empire. It is only with the Augustan age that there begins something which can be called Roman art, but even then so wholesale was the importation of Hellenistic work and Hellenistic artists that it is difficult to say how far native Roman artists are in question.

There is little to distinguish the main reliefs of the Ara Pacis from earlier Hellenistic work. Hellenistic sculptors had for some time

developed some kind of a picture space by means of perspective, and here the picture space is rather clumsily achieved, not without complete lack of proportion in the figures, and there is a pathetic absence of rhythm. If it was a Hellenistic artist who came to Rome to do this, he was a very second-rate one.

This decorative panel from the same *Ara Pacis* set up by Augustus is, however, a highly accomplished work (339). It is perhaps the high-water mark of such a method of relief in Roman art. The artist shows an easy control of the perspective of his figures and the diagonal recessions only break down rather badly in the cow and sheep in the foreground. Again the disposition of the accents of light and shade over the panel shows a feeling for balance and proportion. The execution, however, is as tightly mechanical and insensitive as possible. It would be instructive to put beside this a relief by Clodion, who may perhaps have been inspired by this actual work, in order to see what modern sensibility has added to the result.

Roman portraiture may almost be divided into two distinct classes—according as it follows Hellenistic models on the one hand or Etruscan on the other. Here in the head of Augustus himself (340) we have naturally enough the Hellenistic type which achieves an even more rubbed out, insensitive, mechanical idealism than the Greek originals it followed. Here, on the other hand, is a distinctively Etruscan portrait with a vivid sense of individual character. It is distinctly more literal, more photographic, less completely interpreted than the Etruscan, but it has something of the same vital energy and character.

Or here, again, is an example where that curious Etruscan feeling for the way the eyes appear to look is caught with almost illusionist effect (341). There is, too, a very unusual sensibility and delicacy in the modeling of this mask. There survives, of course, an element of the photographic, of facts taken over too directly from nature without waiting for them to become fully assimilated to the plastic idea, which marks almost all Roman portraiture of the Etruscan type and makes it so curiously like the professional portrait sculpture of our own academic artists.

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The Romans did, however, make one heroic adventure into the realm of ideal plastic form. This was due to the sculptors whom Hadrian commissioned to make divinized statues of his favourite Bithynian slave Antinous. The problem before these sculptors was to create one of those average or generalized portraits which the Greeks had come to regard as expressive of divine beings, and yet not to lose altogether the individual character. The Bithynian boy beauty was sufficiently remote in figure from the Greek ideal of the male figure with its spare muscular athletic forms, in which all superfluous tissue had been reduced by training. For Antinous was at least full fleshed, with a figure that tended to fatness. His face was also fuller, more fleshy and more sensual; its beauty lacked any suggestion of intelligence or distinction. The result of this attempted apotheosis seems to me almost comically pathetic (342). Nothing can exceed the pretentious insignificance of this, with its tight mechanical hardness combined with the absence of any plastic rhythm. The real motive which underlay Hadrian's effort to get his artists to create a new divine type was rather erotic than aesthetic, and that after all is perhaps the only interest which survives the process of idealization as understood by the Romans.

A great deal has been made by enthusiasts for Roman art of the method of continuous representation found on Trajan's column (343), i.e. the representation of the same figures in different actions in a single composition. This is, of course, a convenient way of telling a story by successive scenes. With our increased sense of the demands of pictorial unity we naturally have rejected this and prefer to put a frame round each separate scene. But in any case it is not a matter which concerns the essentials of visual art; it is a question of illustration, of literature by images. It is, we saw in the case of Egypt, only a long-hand hieroglyphic. But naturally the Romans, being essentially practical when once they had become accustomed to pictorial imagery, saw in it chiefly its uses as propaganda or advertisement. We know that in their triumphs Roman generals had carried in procession pictures of the battles in which they had been victorious, and Trajan saw the possibility

of giving to such advertisement a more permanent form. He had a huge column sculptured in spiral strips with reliefs representing his campaigns and achievements. It is difficult to plumb the depth of unintelligence which conceived such a peculiarly futile advertisement, for you see that the figures are on a small scale crowded together in chaotic confusion with no attempt at subordination or plastic syntax. Beyond the first few spirals they produce nothing but an effect of vermiculation.

Amid the general insignificance of Roman art one work, however, stands out in singular isolation, the equestrian statue of Marcus Aurelius on the Capitol (344). Though it is rather dull and trivial in detail, the surprising fact remains that it achieves a real consistency in rhythm which embraces both rider and horse, a feat which, as we are too painfully aware in all our big cities, is very rarely achieved. It remains one of the few equestrian statues in the world which produce an immediate effect on the imagination.

In the decoration of houses of the Augustan era, a peculiar style suddenly appears, of which this is an example (345). It is a stucco panel in low relief with a wide horizon and the suggestion of a large picture space which is altogether unusual in ancient art. I know nothing else like these chinoiseries, as one may call them from their striking likeness to the landscapes in Chinese lacquer. I do not know whether any affinities have been traced for these or where the idea may have originated. It would be little short of miraculous if Roman artists, who otherwise invented nothing, should have made this sudden leap into space from the crowded narrow stage of Classical relief. Moreover, since the Augustan age was so consciously based on the Hellenistic tradition, it is easier to suppose that somewhere in the composite civilization of the Eastern Mediterranean this notion of design took shape. But there can be no denying the charming fantasy and rococo elegance of these works, though the fashion for them passed all too soon.

For the most part the decoration of houses was based on architectural motives in which amusing effects of perspective were often achieved. These were arranged to frame pictures painted on the wall which were

probably often copies of celebrated originals. Certainly the very incompetent craftsman who executed them could never have invented a composition showing such an unusual sense of the picture space as the Farnesina Palace stucchi. It is generally supposed that the wall paintings were the work of quite inferior craftsmen or house-painters, but one wonders how it came about that even the owners of the richest villas could not manage to employ real artists. One half-suspects that there were none; though it is well to remember in this connection that if London were buried under ashes one might dig for centuries without coming to the work of a genuine artist.

The recently discovered villa of the Dionysiac mysteries does, however, bring us into touch with something that has for us a pictorial significance of sorts (346). There is considerable ease in the grouping and significance in the gestures. It does not represent for us a very advanced stage of pictorial art, but it is, so far as it goes, genuinely pictorial.

And with the head of the girl on the left at least we are in the presence of a distinctive pictorial achievement. It might take its place in modern art as by an artist akin to Chassériau, but with a less assured grasp of form. It does more than anything else to give us some sense of regret that Classical painting in its prime has left us no monuments.

# ILLUSTRATIONS

*It has not always been possible to identify with certainty the original examples used by R. F. in his lectures. A few doubtful or substitute illustrations have had therefore to be included, and these are marked with an asterisk.*

1. PICTURE BY PAUL KLEE AND A TRACING.
2. PRINTING, SCRIPT AND HANDWRITING.
3. ALTARPIECE (?NICCOLÒ SEMITECOLO). Venetian, XIV cent. A.D. *Collection Mrs Mark Hambourg (photo. Cooper).*
4. ST MARK (FRA BARTOLOMMEO). Florentine, XV cent. A.D. *Pitti Palace, Florence (photo. Brogi).*
5. SKETCH FOR LES POSEUSES (SEURAT). French, XIX cent. A.D. *Henry McLlheury Collection, Philadelphia.*
6. GREEK VASE. IV cent. B.C. *British Museum, London.*
7. CHINESE BRONZE. Chou. *Collection Mrs Otto Kahn, New York (photo. Murray K. Keyes).*
8. PERSIAN VASE. X-XI cent. A.D. *Victoria and Albert Museum, London.*
9. NEGRO BOTTLE. *Courtauld Institute (Roger Fry Collection).*
10. EGYPTIAN PERFUME BOTTLE FROM THE TOMB OF TUTANKHAMEN. 18th Dynasty. *Cairo Museum (photo. Mr Harry Burton, copyright strictly reserved).*
11. NEGRO TEXTILE.
12. CARPET (DUNCAN GRANT). English, XX cent. A.D. *Miss Fry.*
- \*13. STATUE OF A DAUGHTER OF NIOBE. Greek, V cent. B.C. *Terme Museum, Rome (photo. E. Druck).*
14. STATUE (MAILLOL). French, XX cent. A.D.
15. EGYPTIAN FRESCO FROM MAI DUN. *Cairo Museum.*
16. PERSIAN PLATE. XII cent. (Amol) A.D. *Victoria and Albert Museum.*
17. JAPANESE PAINTING (JAKUCHÛ ITO). 1700-1800 A.D. *Kokka.*
18. PERSIAN PLATE. *Victoria and Albert Museum.*
19. LION'S HEAD, FROM THE 'TEMPLE OF MINERVA', PALERMO. Greek, VI cent. B.C. *Museo Nazionale, Palermo.*
20. PIG'S HEAD, FROM NEW GUINEA.
21. BRAZILIAN BARK MASKS.
22. WOUNDED LIONESS RELIEF FROM NINEVEH (ASSUR-BANI-PAL). Assyrian, c. 650 B.C. *British Museum, London.*

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266. RELIEF FROM ELLORA. Indian, c. 700 A.D. *(Photo. Musée Guimet, Paris.)*
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268. SHORE TEMPLE AT MAMALLAPURAM. Indian, VIII cent. A.D. *(Photo. Goloubev, Musée Guimet, Paris.)*
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297. RHODIAN POT, FROM CAMIRUS. Greek, VII cent. B.C. *Louvre, Paris.*
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301. SEATED GODDESS. Greek, V cent. B.C. *Altes Museum, Berlin.*
302. RUNNING FIGURE FROM ELEUSIS. Greek, V cent. B.C. *Eleusis Museum.*

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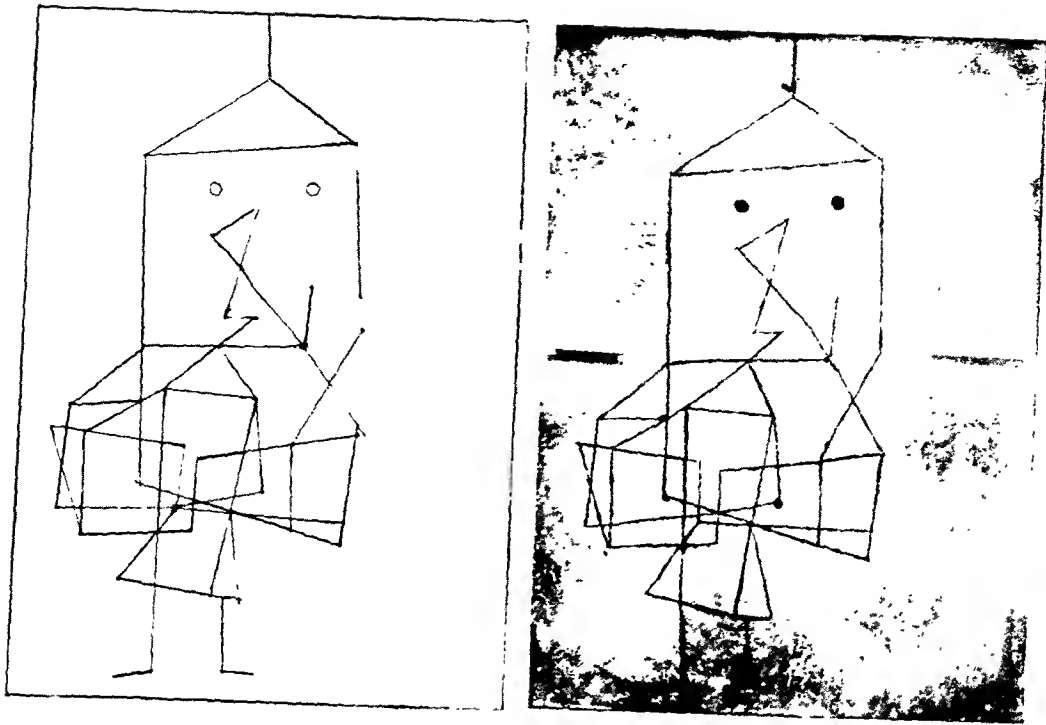
303. ENTOMBMENT OF THE VIRGIN, FROM SENLIS. French, Romanesque. (*Photo. Giraudon.*)
- 304, 305. KORE HEADS. Greek, VI-V cent. B.C. *Acropolis Museum, Athens* (*photos. Prof. B. Ashmole.*)
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308. RELIEF FROM SIPHNIAN TREASURY. Greek, late VI cent. B.C. *Delphi Museum* (*photo. Emil.*)
309. METOPE FROM TEMPLE AT SELINUS. Greek, late VI cent. B.C. *Museo Nazionale, Palermo.*
310. HERACLES CLEANING AUGEAN STABLES (METOPE FROM TEMPLE AT OLYMPIA). Greek, early V cent. B.C. (*Photo. Kunstgeschichtliche Seminar, Marburg.*)
311. HERACLES AND THE CRETAN BULL (METOPE FROM TEMPLE AT OLYMPIA). Greek, early V cent. B.C. (*Photo. Kunstgeschichtliche Seminar, Marburg.*)
312. CENTAUR AND LAPITH (FROM WEST PEDIMENT, TEMPLE AT OLYMPIA). Greek, early V cent. B.C. (*Photo. Kunstgeschichtliche Seminar, Marburg.*)
313. FLUTEPLAYER FROM LUDOVISI THRONE. Greek, V cent. B.C. *Terme Museum, Rome* (*photo. Anderson.*)
314. FIGURE (MAILLOL). French, XX cent. A.D. *Roger Fry Collection* (*photo. A. Colebrook.*)
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316. ATHENA (MYRON). Greek, V cent. B.C. (Roman copy). *Städelsches Kunstinstitut, Frankfurt-am-Main* (*photo. Kunstgeschichtliche Seminar, Marburg.*)
317. 'THESEUS', FROM PARTHENON PEDIMENT. Greek, V cent. B.C. *British Museum, London.*
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319. 'THE FATES', FROM PARTHENON PEDIMENT. Greek, V cent. B.C. *British Museum, London.*
320. NIKE UNFASTENING SANDAL. Greek, V cent. B.C. *Acropolis Museum, Athens* (*photo. Wagner.*)
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323. STATUE OF VENUS. Hellenistic, III cent. B.C. *Museo Nazionale, Syracuse* (photo. Anderson).
324. BATTLE SCENE, FROM THE GREAT ALTAR AT PERGAMUM. Greek, c. 180 B.C. *Pergamon Museum, Berlin* (photo. Giraudon, from a cast).
325. THE GREAT ALTAR AT PERGAMUM. *Pergamon Museum, Berlin*.
326. NIKE OF SAMOTHRACE. Greek, c. 258 B.C. *Louvre, Paris*.
327. FARNESE BULL. Hellenistic, I cent. B.C. (Roman copy). *Museo Nazionale, Naples* (photo. Anderson).
328. DARIUS AND ALEXANDER. Greek, IV cent. B.C. (Roman mosaic copy). *Museo Nazionale, Naples* (photo. Alinari).
329. ALDOBRANDINI WEDDING. Hellenistic, I cent. A.D. *Biblioteca Vaticana, Rome* (photo. Anderson).
330. POUSSIN'S COPY OF THE ALDOBRANDINI WEDDING. French, XVII cent. A.D. *Doria Palace, Rome* (photo. Anderson).
331. STREET SINGER. Alexandrian, III-II cent. B.C. *Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris* (photo. Giraudon).
332. DEMOSTHENES. Hellenistic, III cent. B.C. (Roman copy). *Museo Vaticano, Rome* (photo. Anderson).
333. EUTHYDEMUS OF BACTRIA. Hellenistic, late III cent. B.C. *Museo Torlonia, Rome* (photo. Deutsche Archäologisches Institut, Rome).
334. ARSINOE, QUEEN OF EGYPT. Hellenistic, c. 200 B.C. *Museum of Fine Arts, Boston*.
335. WALL-PAINTING (TOMBADEL TRICLINIO AT CORNETO). Etruscan, V cent. B.C. (Photo. Alinari).
336. APOLLO OF VEII. Etruscan, late VI cent. B.C. *Museo Villa Giulia, Rome* (photo. Alinari).
337. HEAD (DETAIL OF 336). (Photo. Anderson.)
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339. RELIEF OF TELLUS FROM ARA PACIS. Roman, I cent. A.D. *Galleria Uffizi, Florence* (photo. Brogi).
340. HEAD OF AUGUSTUS. Roman, I cent. A.D. *British Museum*.
341. HEAD OF A WOMAN. Roman, I cent. A.D. *Museo Gregoriano Vatican, Rome* (photo. Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Rome).

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- 343. TRAJAN'S COLUMN. Roman, 112 A.D.
- 344. STATUE OF MARCUS AURELIUS, ON THE CAPITOL, ROME. Roman, late II cent. A.D. (*Photo. Anderson*).
- 345. STUCCO FROM THE FARNESINA PALACE. Roman, late I cent. B.C. *Terme Museum, Rome* (*photo. Anderson*).
- 346. FRESCO OF DIONYSIAC MYSTERIES. Hellenistic, II-(?) cent. B.C. (Roman copy). *Villa Item, Pompeii* (*photo. Alinari*).



1. Picture by Paul Klee and ruled copy.

Furthermore, if Nat  
And thus in person :  
" What is it, mortal,  
That thou to such e  
Shouldst yield? W  
For if the life thou h  
Was pleasant to the  
As though poured in  
Have flowed throug  
Why not then, like :  
Take thy departure,

<sup>12/1</sup> *B*inas a te uno ~~tempore~~  
me, et letitiam quam  
exposuerunt. illo hui  
declarando utroque, inq  
uam te tamen magn  
superior sis, letitiam  
esse experenda. quod  
qua mihi ad Remp. t  
est proprium, te amo

but what I mean in this  
is, I think - is that we  
in the car on the road  
Lovers - about 1800 is  
then any chance of find  
the first time to meet a  
friend all kinds of it  
the time a path to the  
Stations' he is slow  
in his manner things  
and, but a cleavage  
about 1800 the first  
trunked his first step  
1800

2. Printed page and written page.



3. Venetian Altarpiece.



4. St. Mark (Fra Bartolommeo)



5. Scrat: sketch for Les Posseuses.

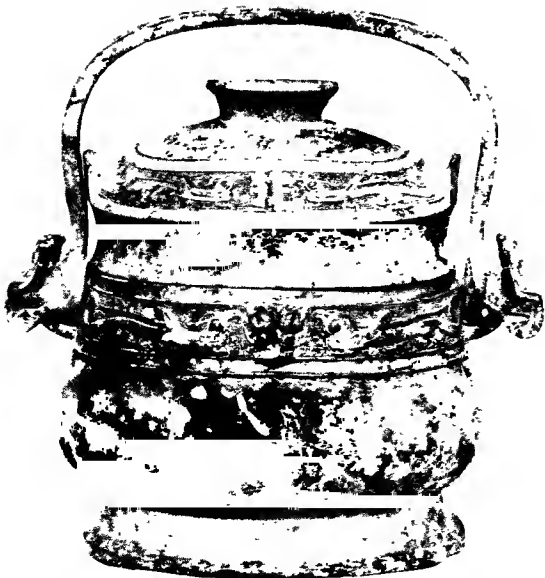




6. Greek vase.



8. Persian vase.



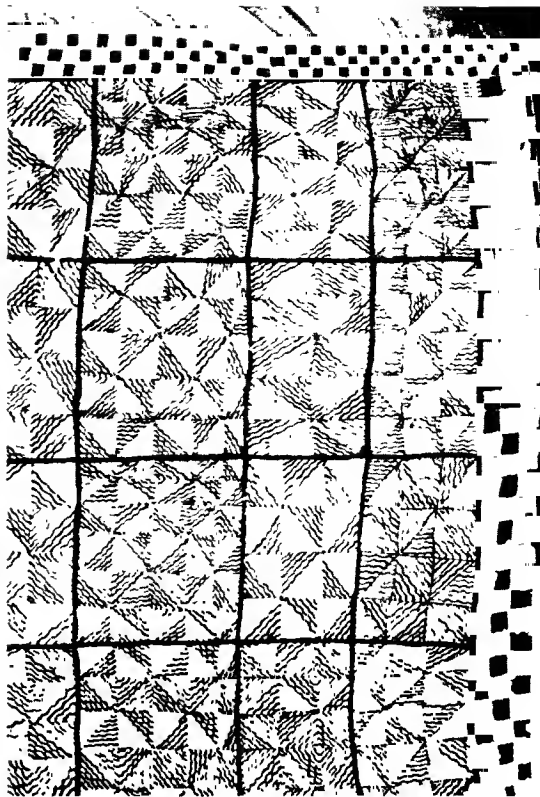
7. Chinese bronze yu.



9. Negro bottle.



10. Scent bottle from Tutankhamen's tomb.



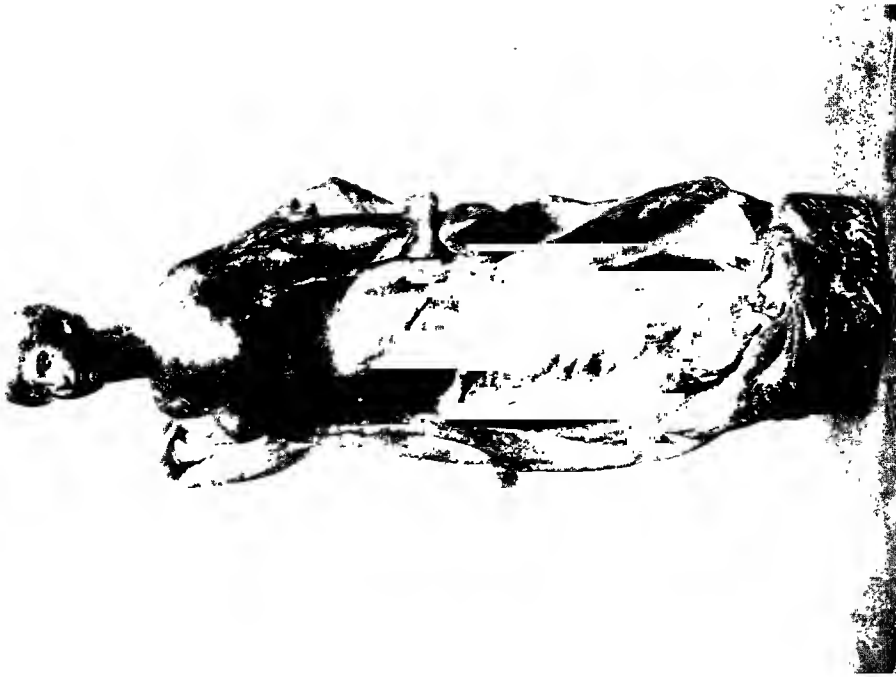
11. Negro Textile.



12. Part of Carpet design by Duncan Grant.



\*13 Greek statue.



14. Statue by Maillol.



15. Egyptian fresco at Mai Dum.



16. Persian plate.



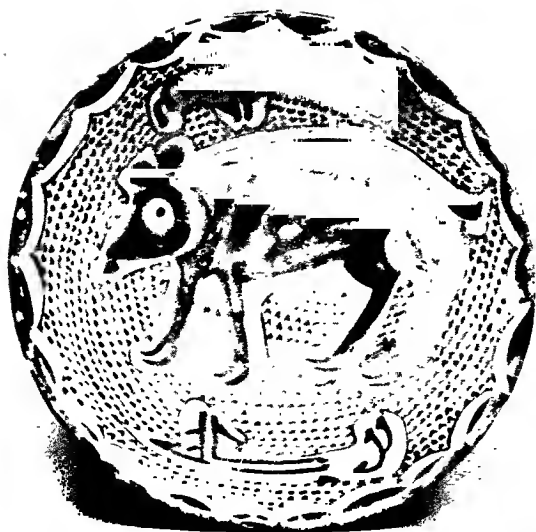
17. Japanese painting.



20. Pig's head (New Guinea).



21. Brazilian bark masks.



18. Persian plate.



19. Lion's head from the 'Temple of Minerva', Palermo.



22. Assyrian relief of a dying lioness.



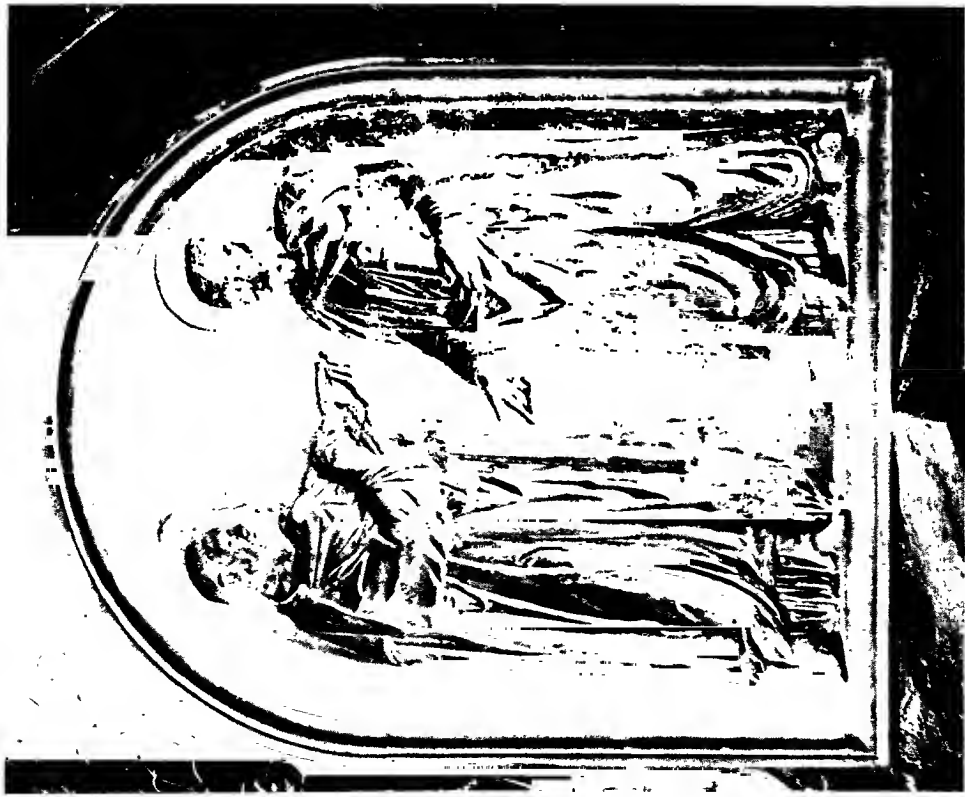
23. Mexican statuette of a dog



26. Lapith and Centaur, from the Parthenon.



24. Head of a Giant, from the Great Altar, Pergamum.



25. SS. Cosmas and Damian (Donatello)



27. The Temptation — capital from Antun Catholic





28. Scythian Brooch.



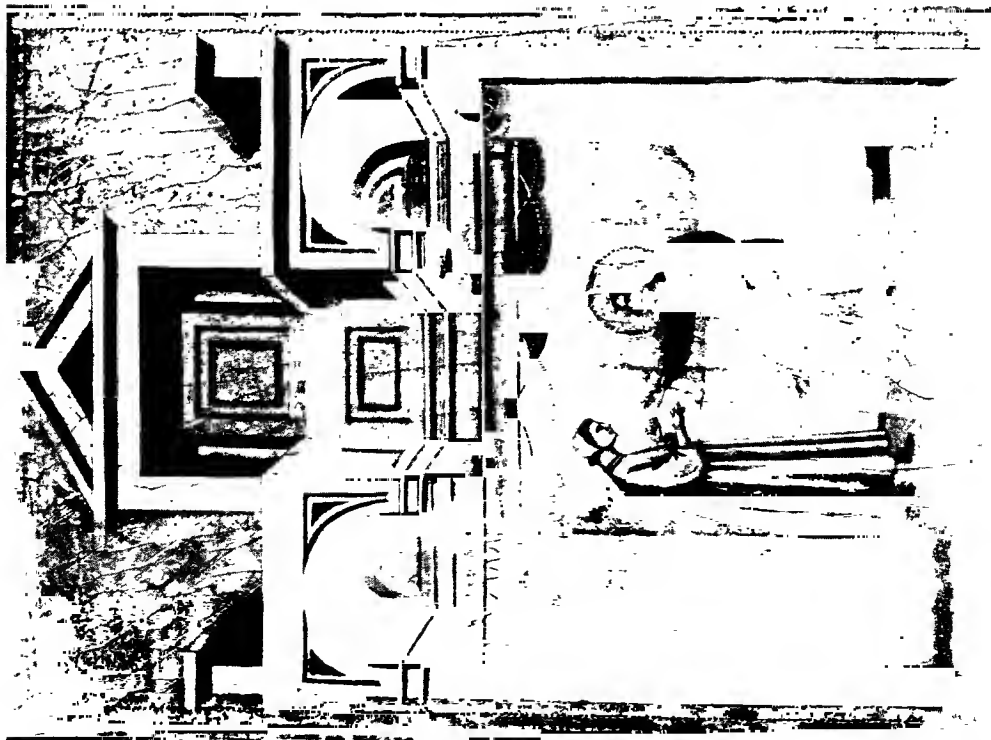
29. Scythian ornament.



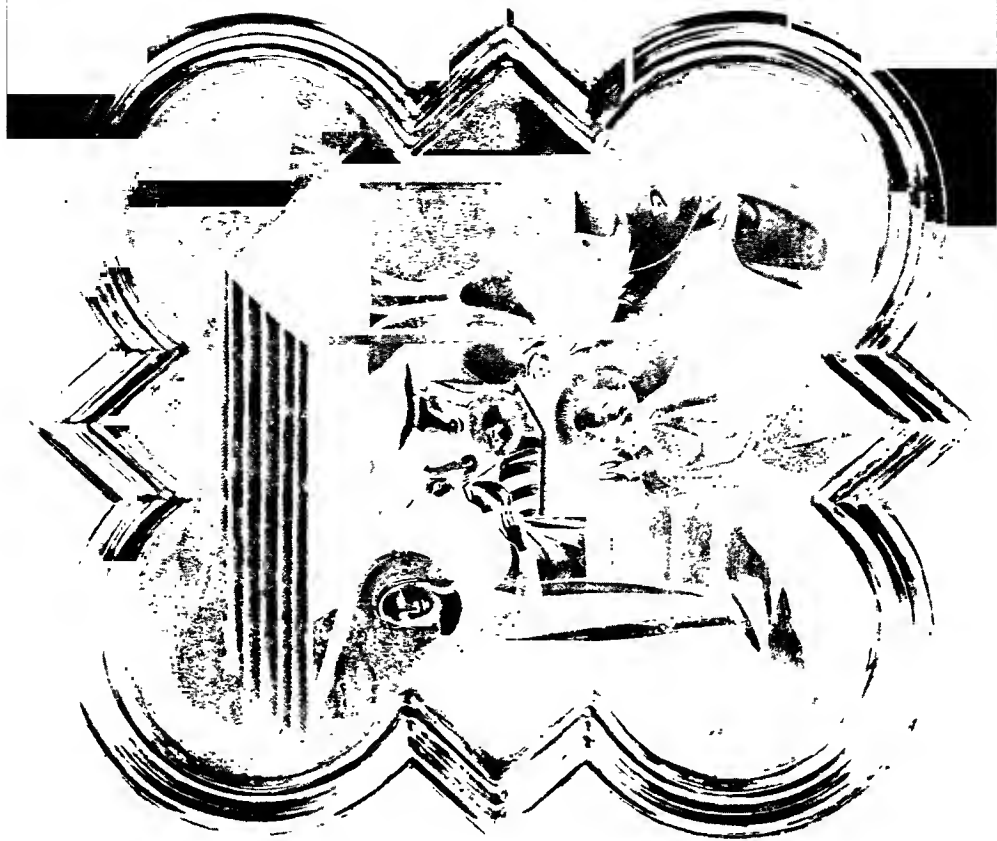
31. Relief of ploughing, by Giotto.



39. Two Negro figures.



32. Predella panel, by the Cecilia Master.



33. Nativity (Taddeo Gaddi)



34. Santa Cecilia (Raphael).



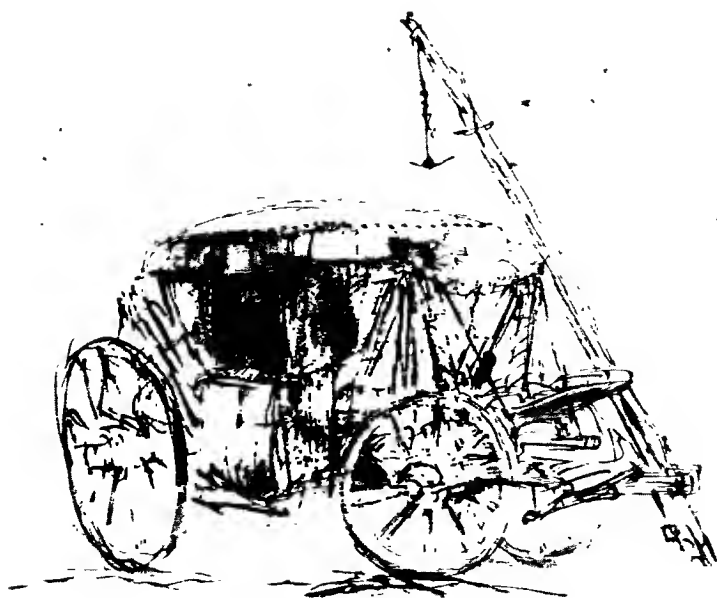
35. The Childhood of Christ (A. Carracci).



36. Drawing by Rembrandt.



38. St John the Baptist (Rouault).



37. Drawing by Rembrandt.



39. Head of a soldier.



40. St Elizabeth.



41. 'Lo Zuccone' (Donatello).



42. Crucifixion (Matthias Grünewald)



43. Crucifixion (Castagno)



44. Painting by Liang K'ai.



47. Egyptian relief.

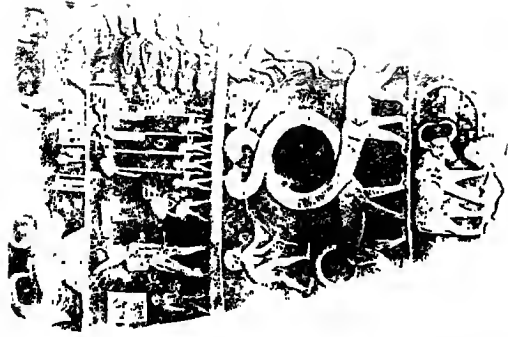
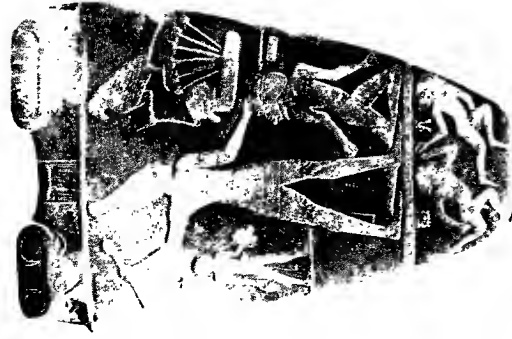


45. God of Longevity (Korin).



46. Child's drawing.





48. Palettes of King Narmer.



50, 51. Two views of the Ivory King of Abydos.



49. Ape of King Narmer



52. Head of King Chephren.



53. Portrait-statue of a scribe.



54. Lion of Amenophis.



55. Statuette of a girl.



56. Statuette of a Negress.



57. Head of a woman carrying flowers.



58. Official portrait-statue of Akhenaten.



59. Statue of Akhenaten at Karnak.



60. Head of Akhenaten by Thutmosis.



63. Torso of a statue of Akhenaten's daughter.



61. Mask by Thutmosis.



62. Mask by Thutmosis.



64. Statue of Tutankhamen.



65. Statue of Rameses II.



66. Portrait-head (Saiti period).



68.



67-9. Pottery from Susa.



69.





70. Statue of a Bull.



71. Bronze figure of a Bull.



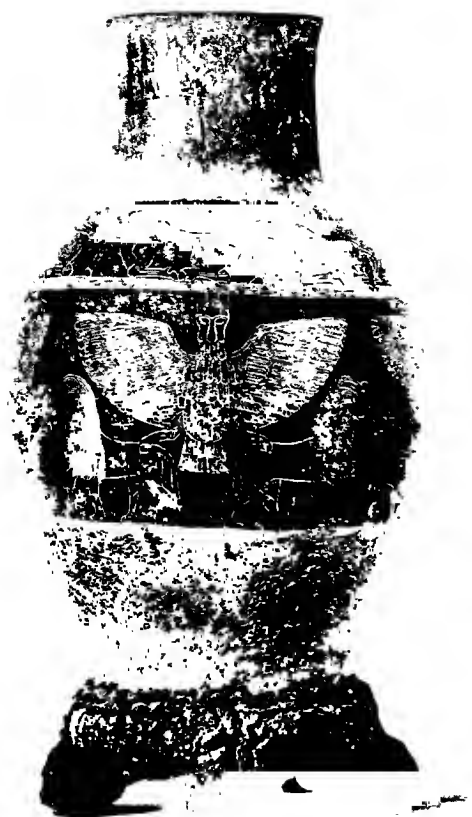
72. Bronze figure of an ass.



73. Bull's head on a harp.



74. Bronze plaque.



75. Silver vase from Lagash.



76. Portrait-statue of an official.



77. Head of Gudea.



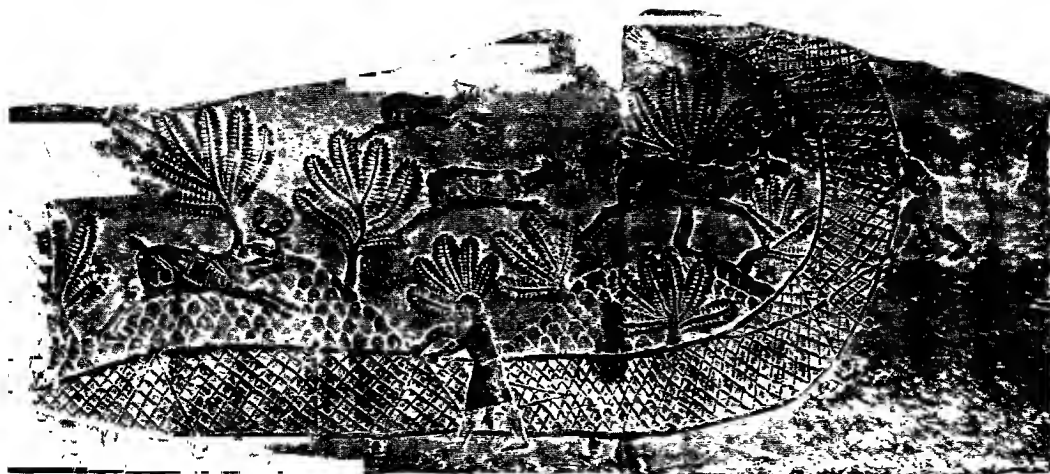
80. Head of a goddess.



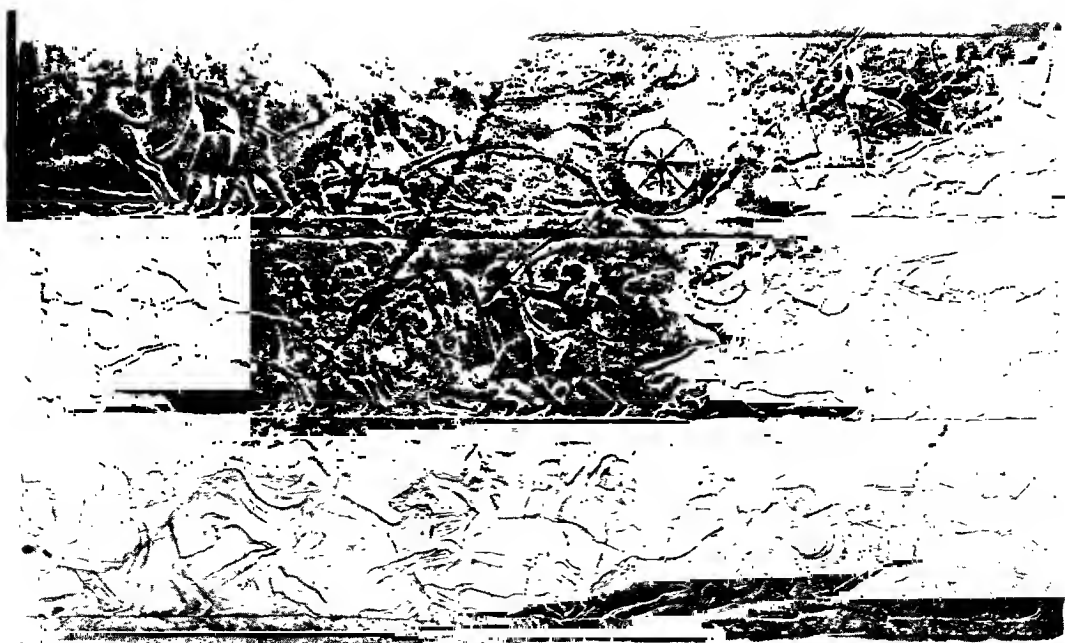
78. Statue of Gudea.



79. Statue of a Susan queen.



81. Relief of deer hunting.



82. Relief of a battle.



83. Harvest festival cup.



85. Vaphio cup.



86. Plaque of flying fish and shells.



84. Fresco of a prince.



87. Octopus vase.

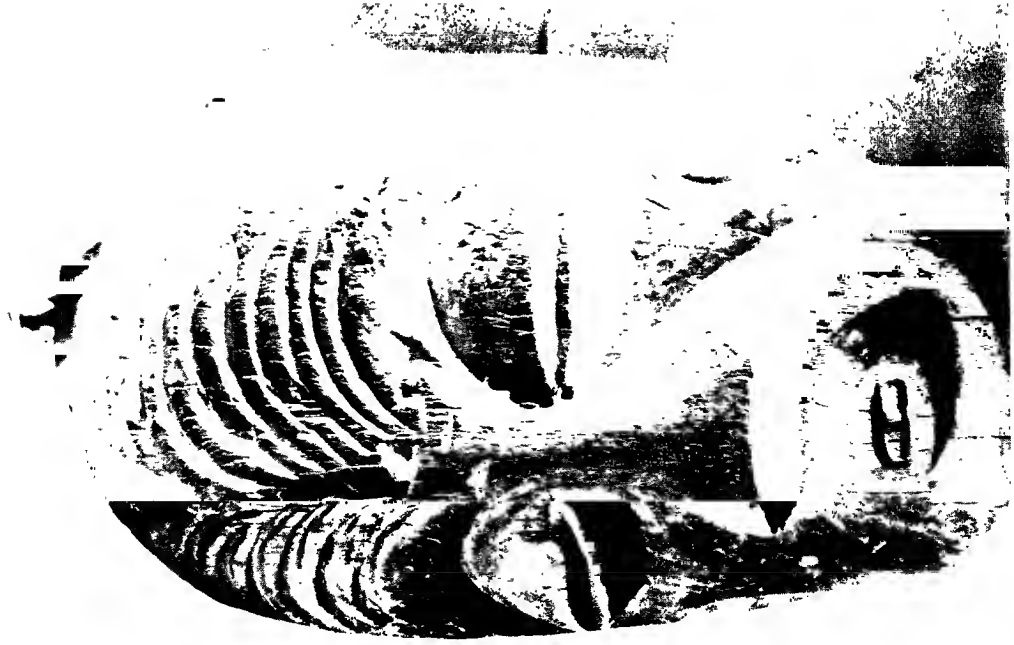


88. Negro figure.



89. Spirit head.





\*90. Mask.



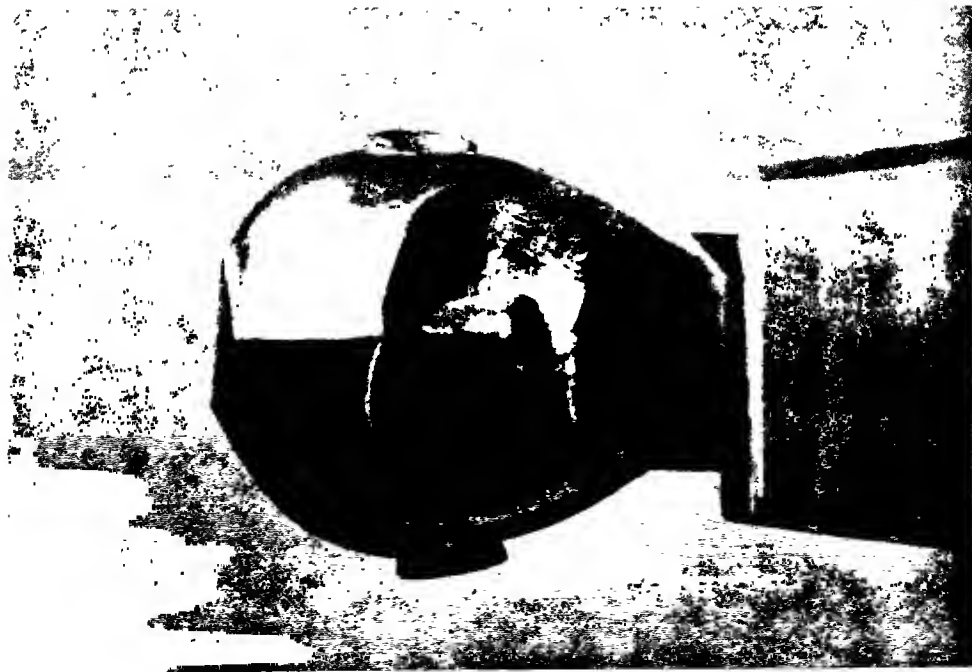
91. Head of a girl.



92. Fetish figure.



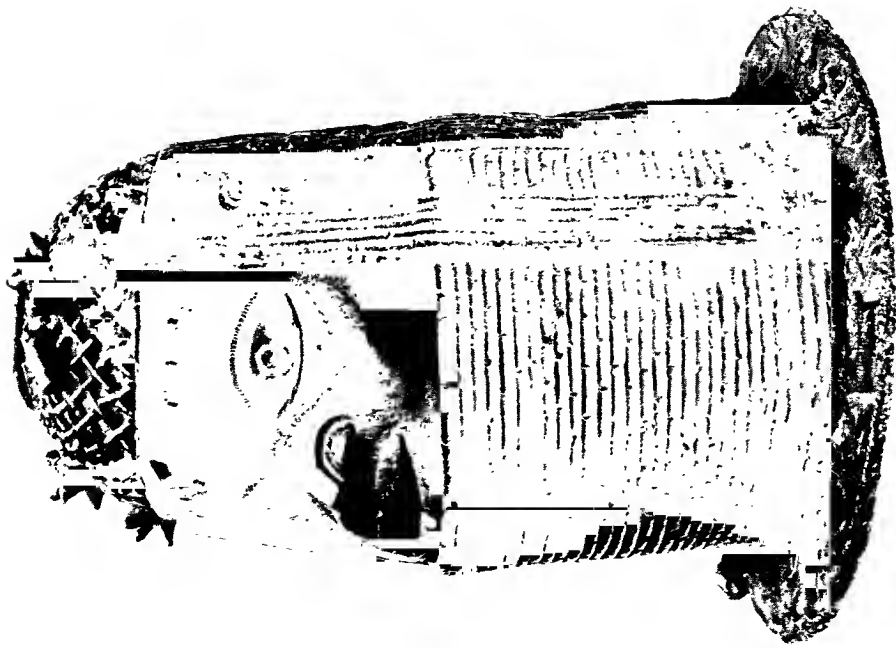
93, 94. Two views of a Spirit head.



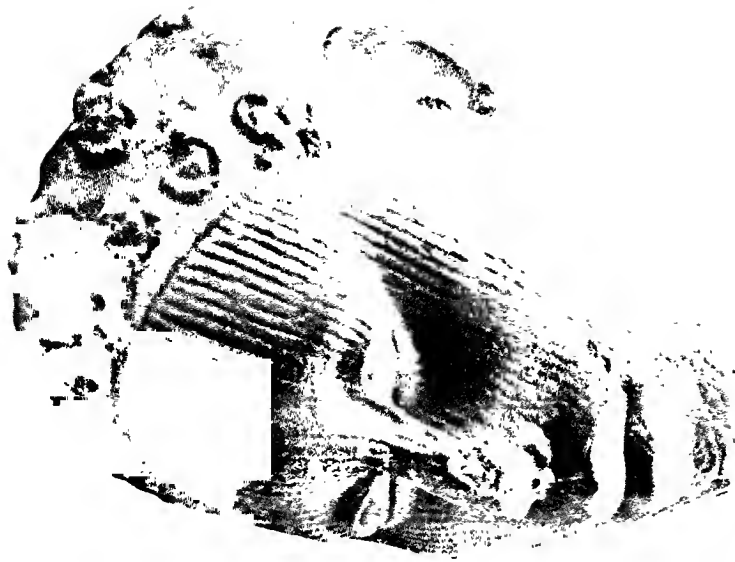
95. Head in polished wood.



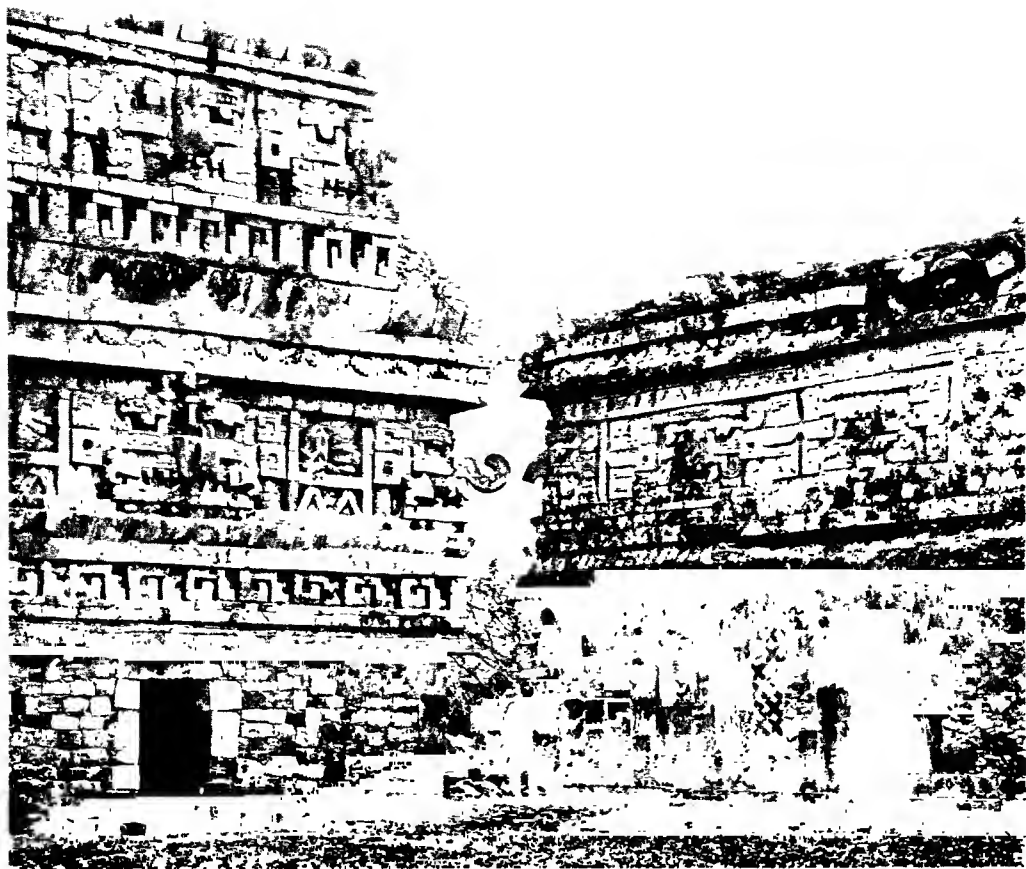
96. Spirit head.



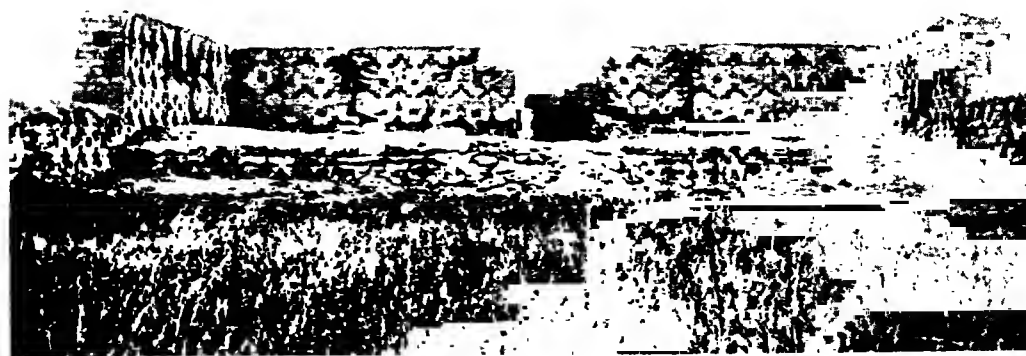
97. Bronze from Benin.



98. Head in terra cotta from Ife



99. Maya temple.



100. Peruvian temple.



101. Peruvian textile.



102 Mexican pot.



103. Stone statue



104. Aztec Mask (early).



105. Aztec Mask.



107. Mask of a god.

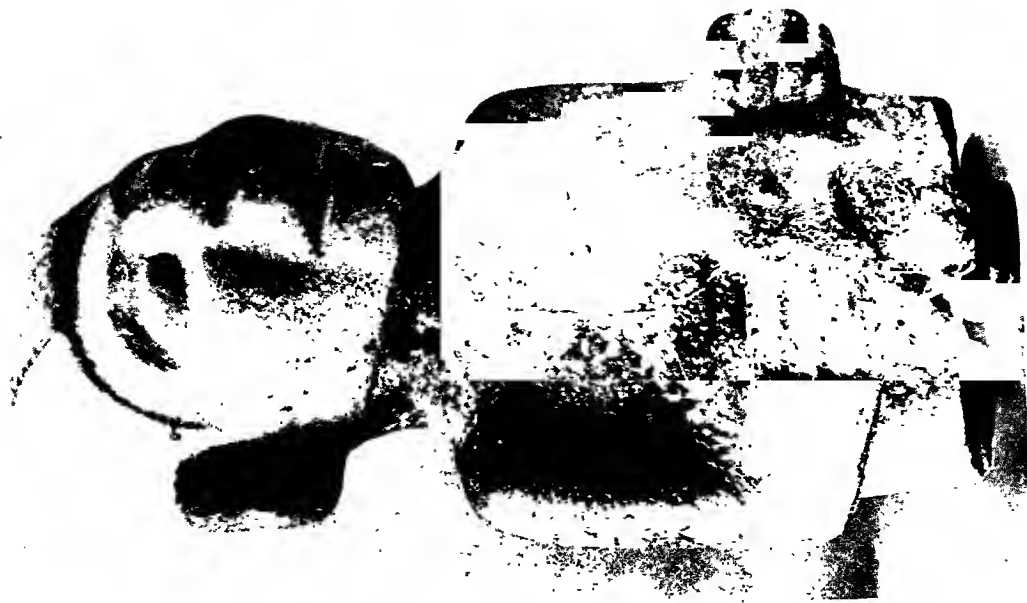


108. Mexican bowl in marble.





106. Head from Copan.



109. Mexican figure.



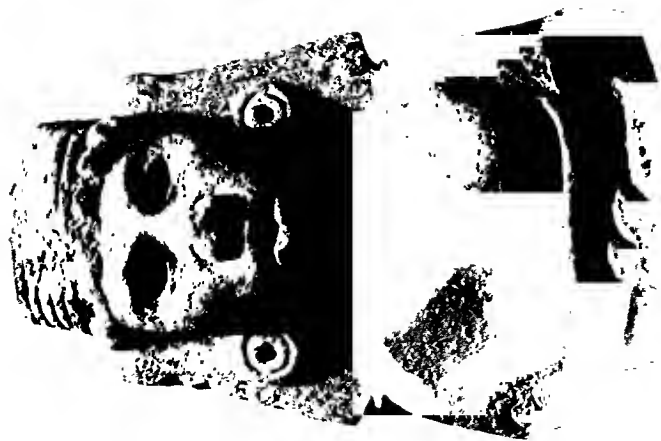
110. Seated figure.



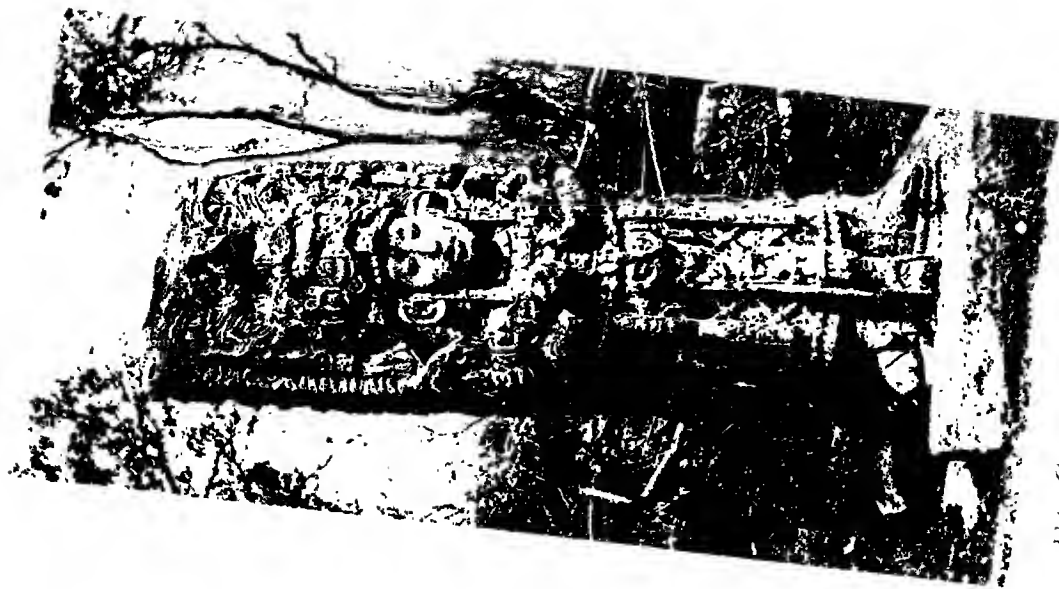
112. Mask of an old man.



113. Head of a god.



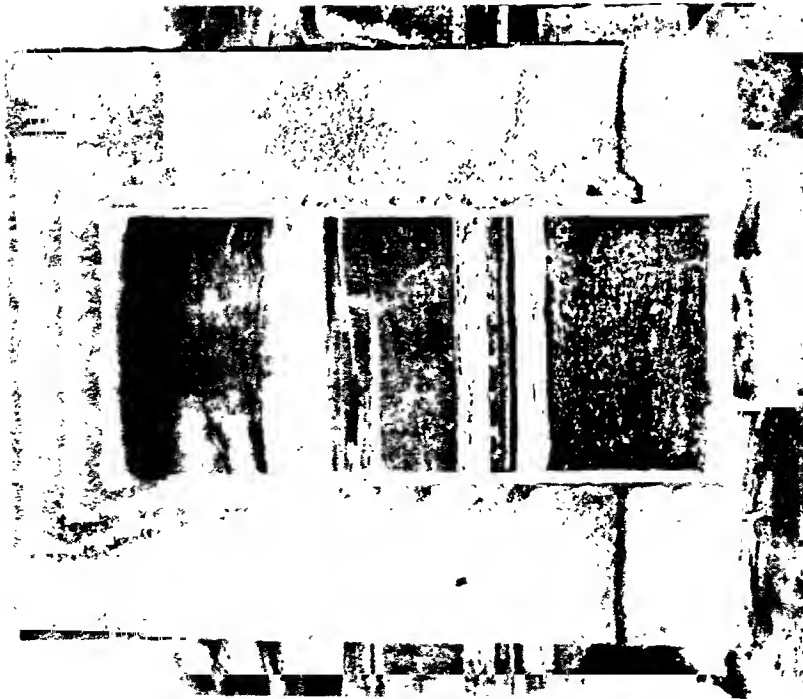
114. Female figure in stone.



114. Carved stone from Copass.



115. Relief from Palace, Palenque.



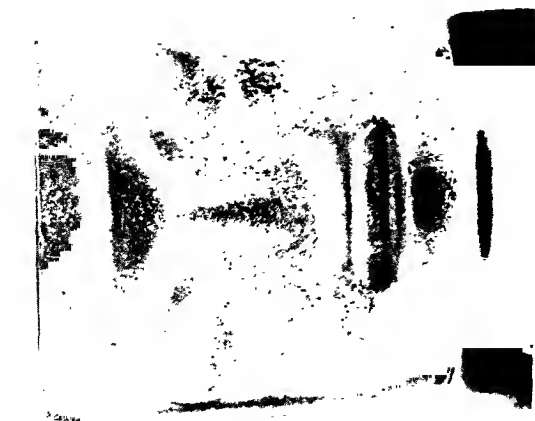
116 Doorway at Tihuanaco.



117 Wall (near Tihuanaco).



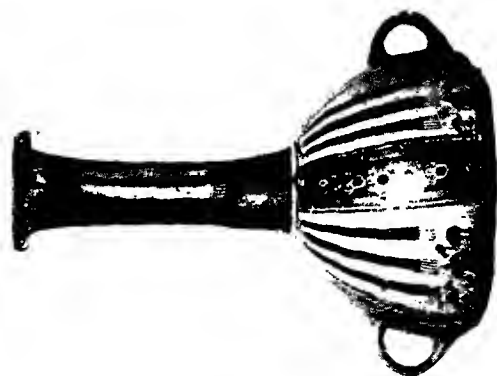
120, 121. Figures of llamas.



118. Stone mortar.

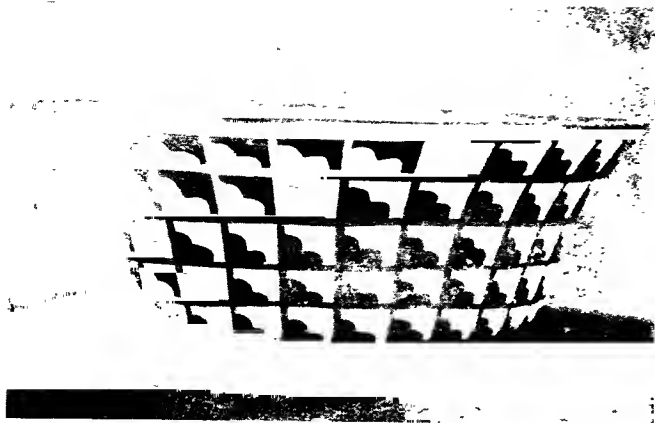


119. Condor's head.

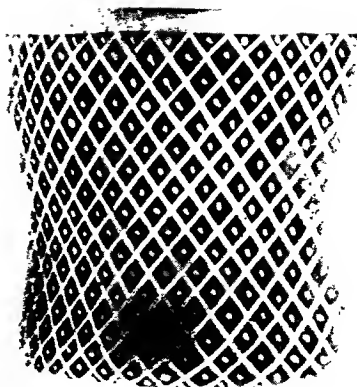


122. Highland pots.





123. Nazca pot.



124. Nazca pot.



125. Nazca pot.



126. Ica pot.



127. Pot in form of parrot.



128. Pot with figure of a monkey.



129. Pot in form of lady.

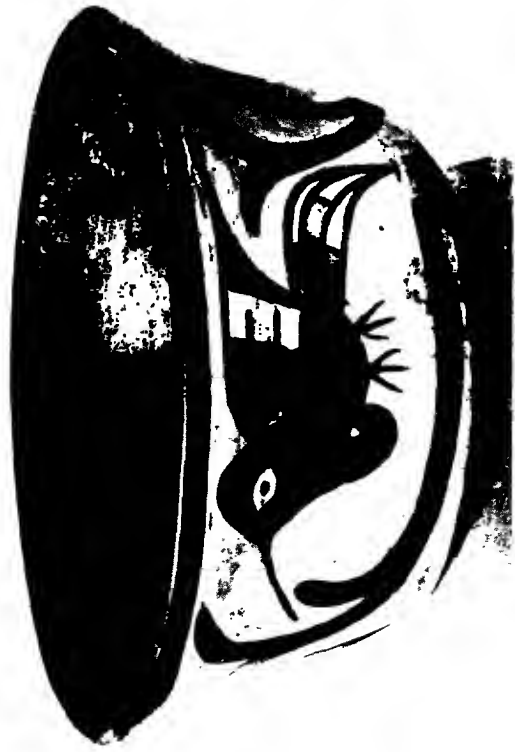


130. Pot with figures of dead men playing pan-pipes.





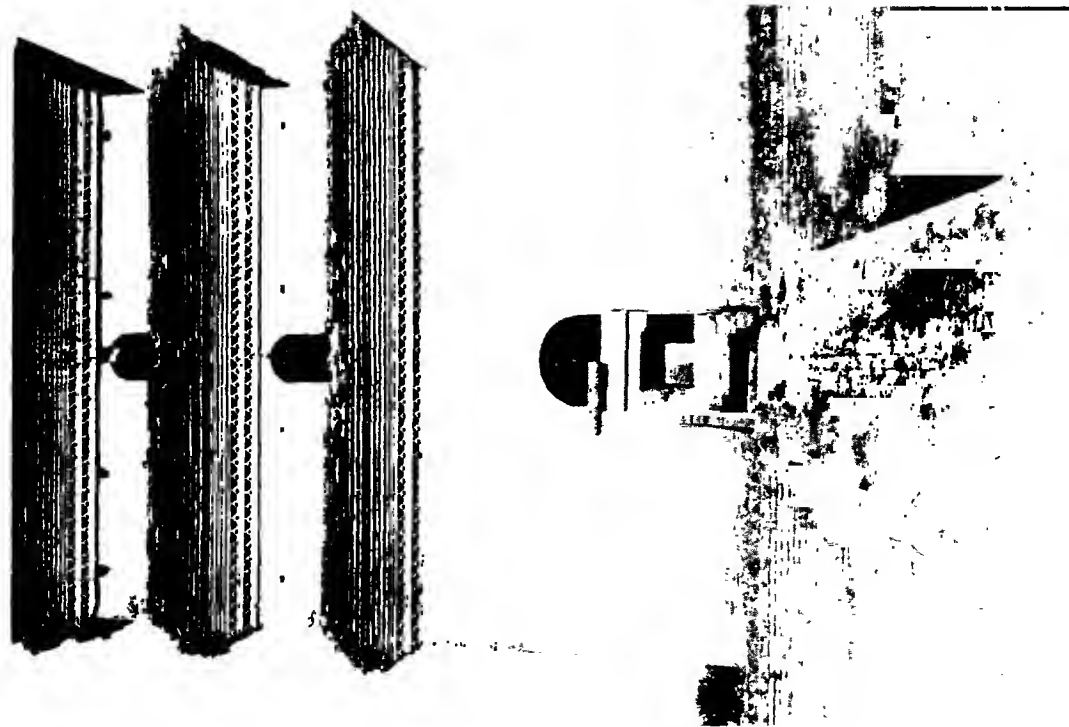
131. Pot with decoration of peppers.



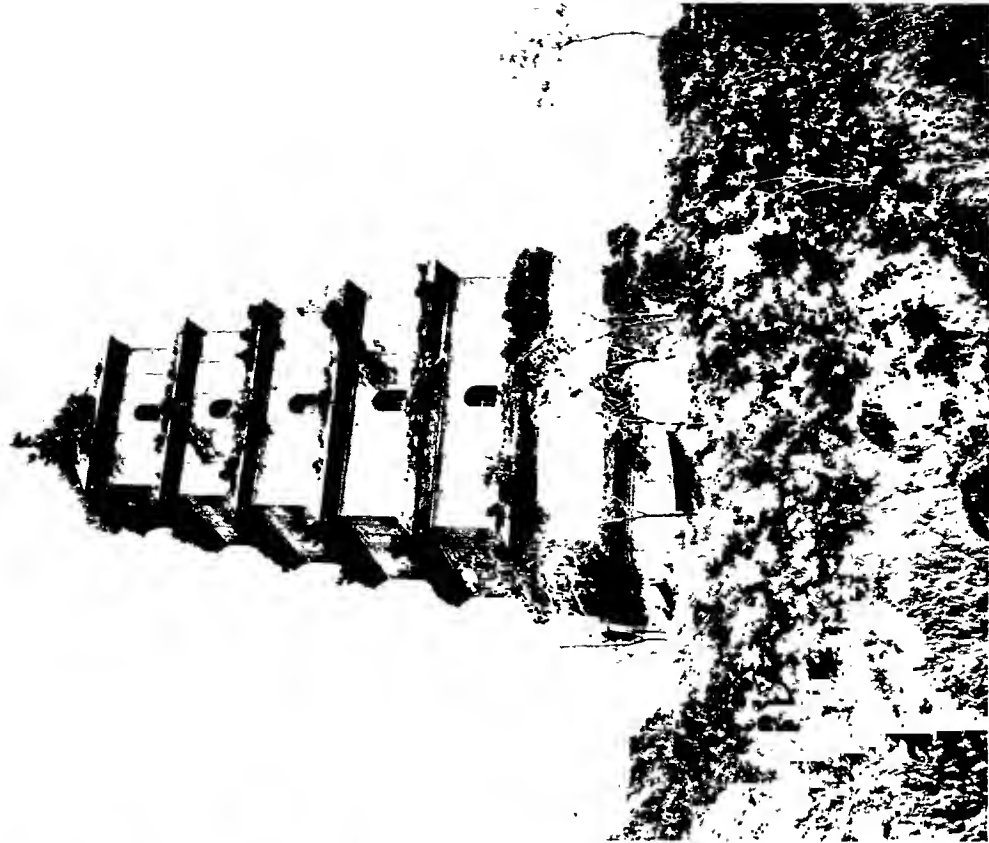
132. Pot with hummingbird decoration.



133. Pot in form of an old man.

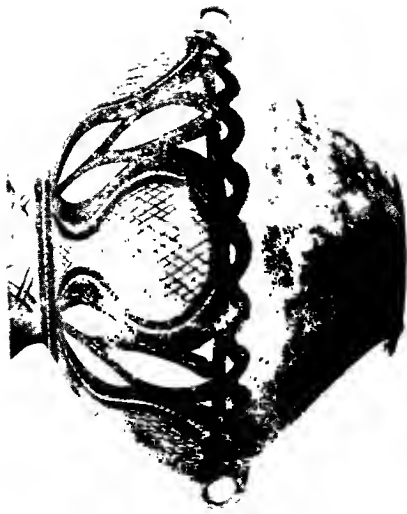


134. Base of Pagoda.



135. Pagoda.





137, 138. Neolithic painted pottery.



139. Tripod pot (early), clay.



140. Tripod pot (Chou).



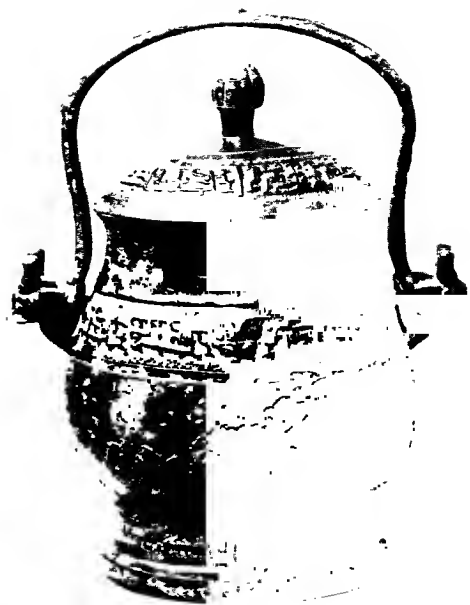
141. Han relief: finding the cauldrons.



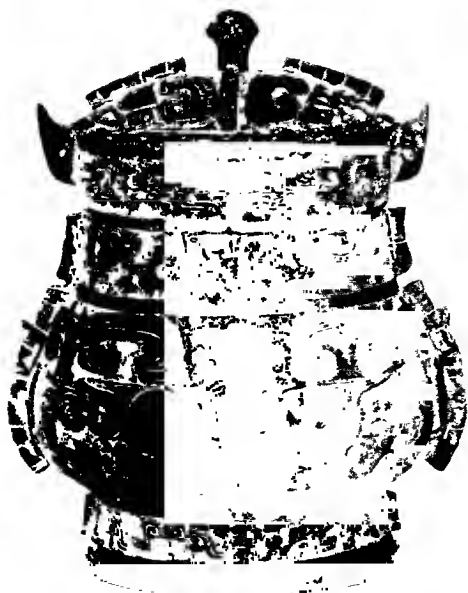
142. Altar and stand utensils.



143. Yu from the altar stand (142).



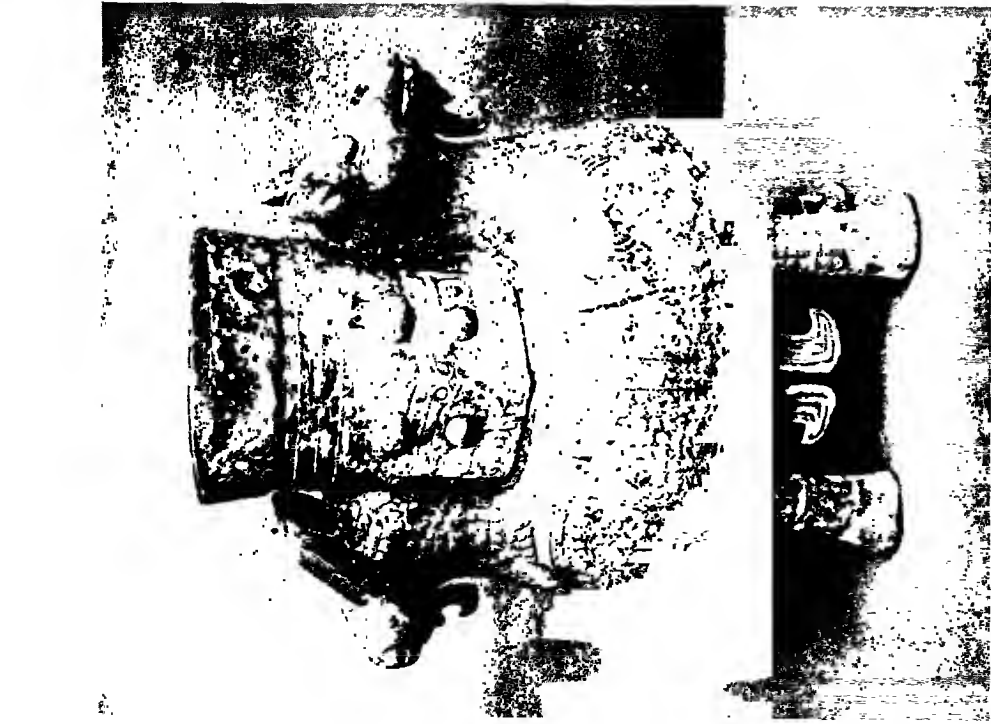
144. Late Yu.



145. Owl Yu.



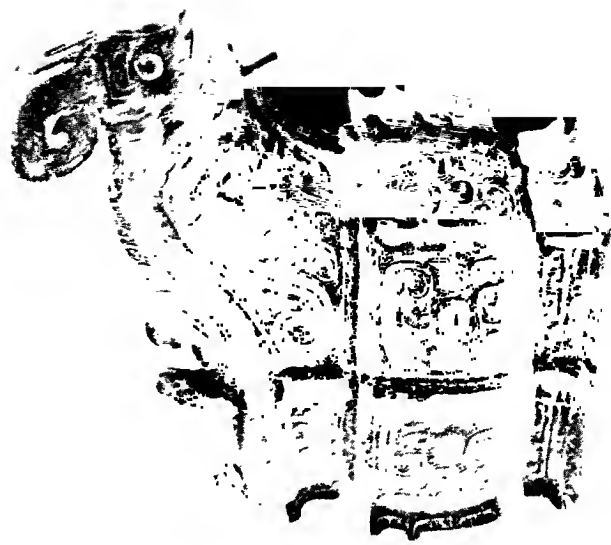
146. Intermediate Yu.



147. Ram vase.



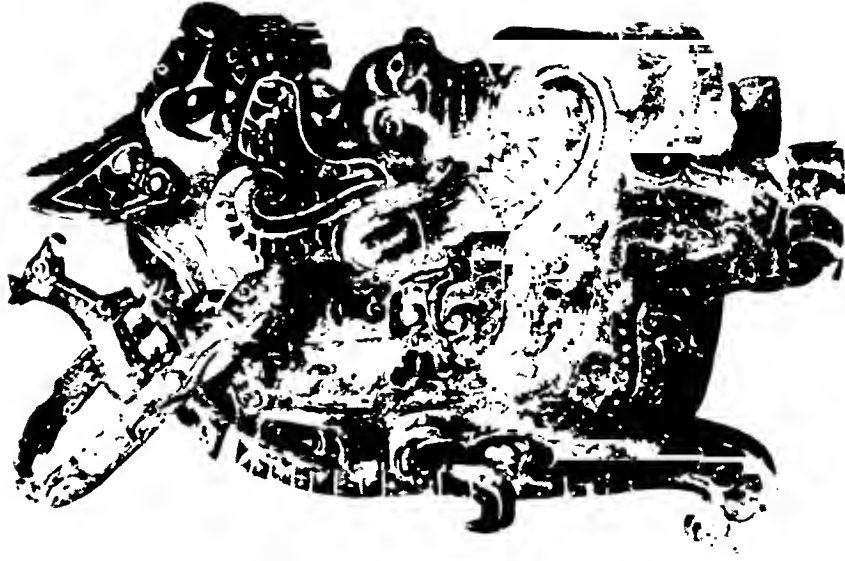
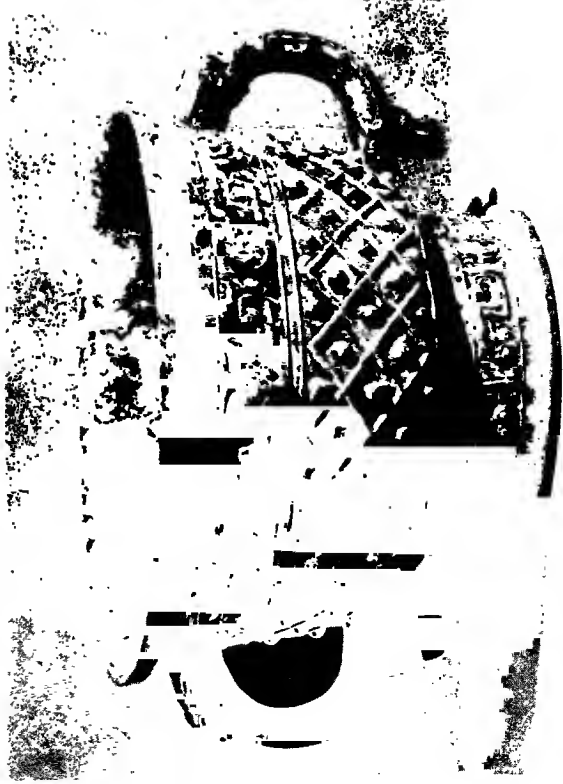
148. Kuang in form of monster.



150. Kuang with flat horns.



151. Bowl with elephant-trunk handles.

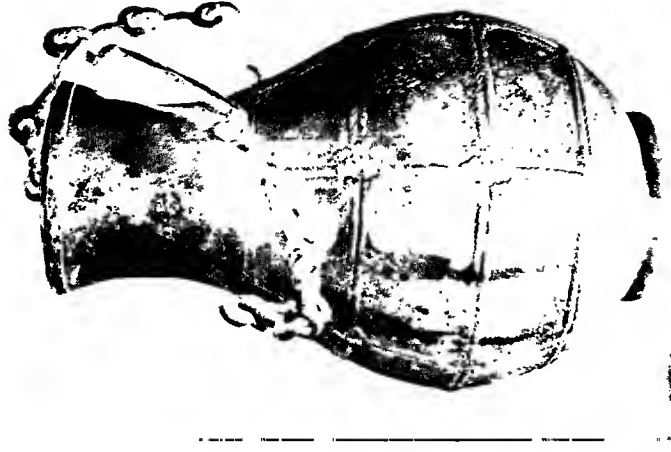


149. Kuang in form of man-eating monster.





153. Four-legged bowl.



154. Tall Vn.



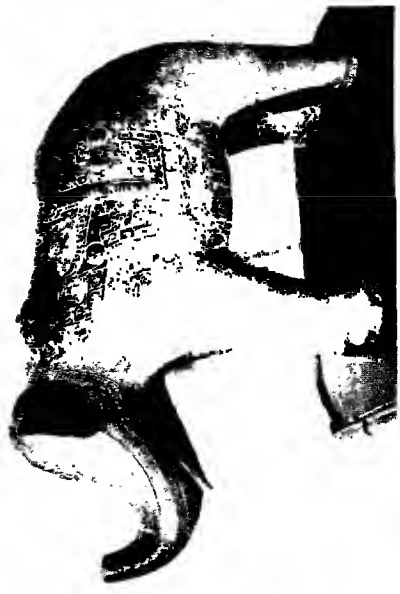
155. Jar in form of owl



157. Bronze figure of a water buffalo.



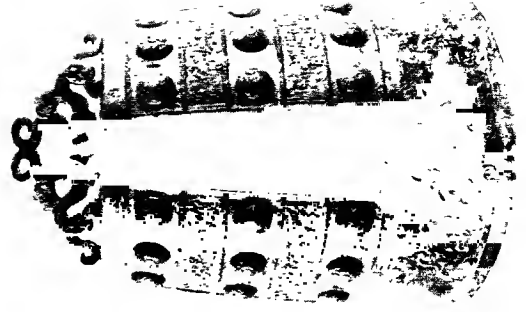
158. Grasshoppers.



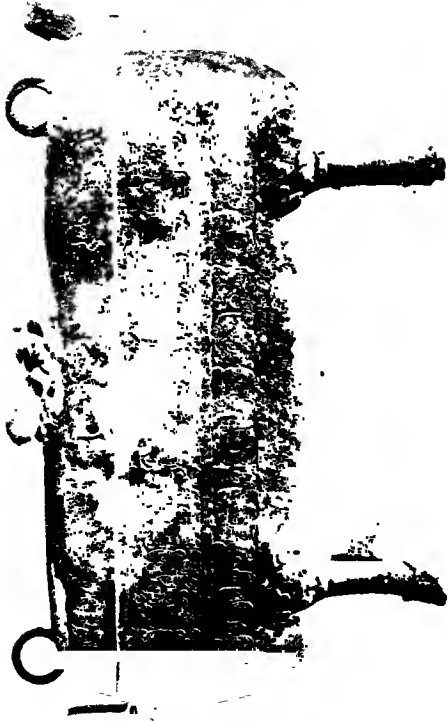
156. Elephant pot.



162. Ch'in mirror.



161. Ceremonial Bell.



159. Four-footed Ch'in jar.



160. Figure of a hare (Ch'in).



163. Figure of a dragon.



164. Ch'in jar.



165. Figure of a bear.



166. Niello vase.



167. Inlaid bronze vase.



168. Bronze mirror.



169. Painted vase.



171.

Gold figures of bulls  
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170. Vase from Maikop.



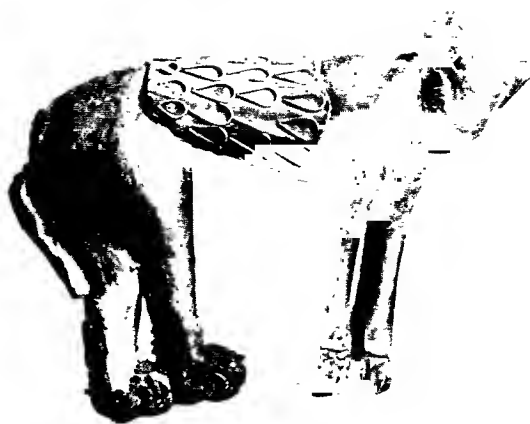
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174. Bronze deer.



173. Bronze pole head.



177. Figure of a panther from the Crimea.



175. Siberian mirror.



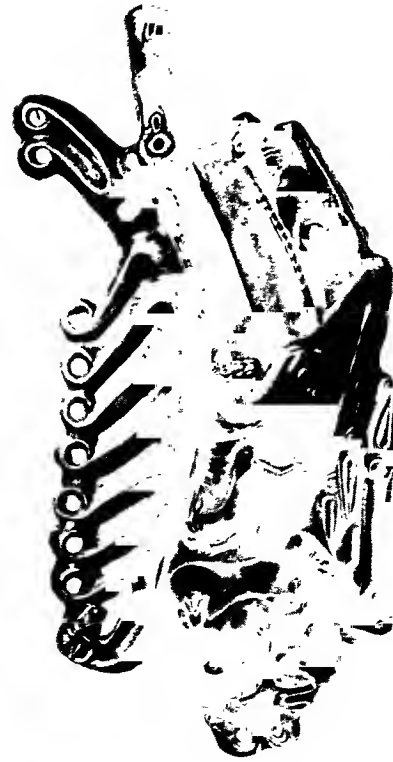
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182. Bronze torque (Siberia).



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186. Chinese plaque.

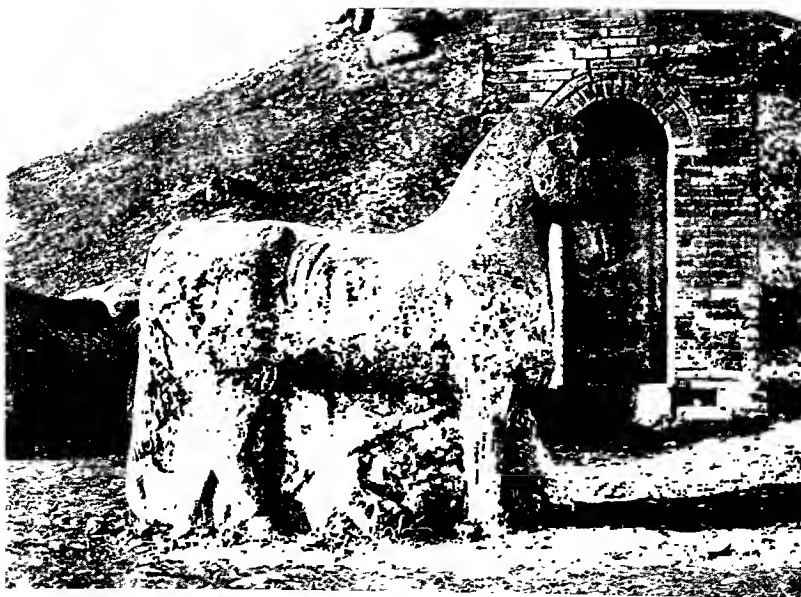


185. Western nomad plaque.





187. Corner support.



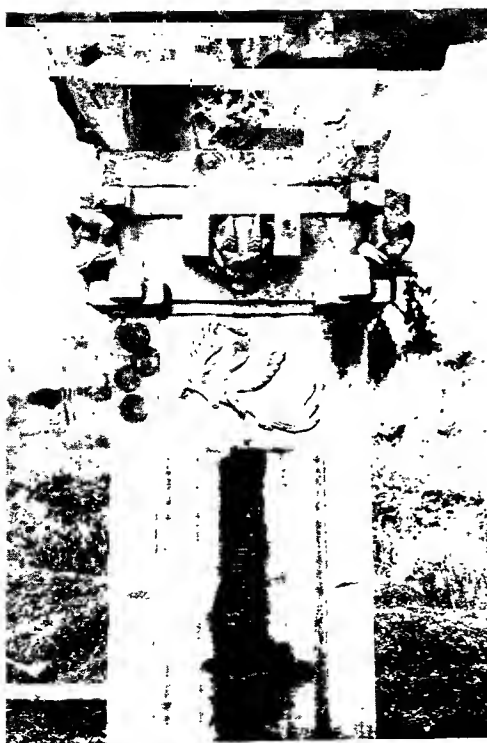
188. Statue of a horse at Ho Chu Ping's tomb.



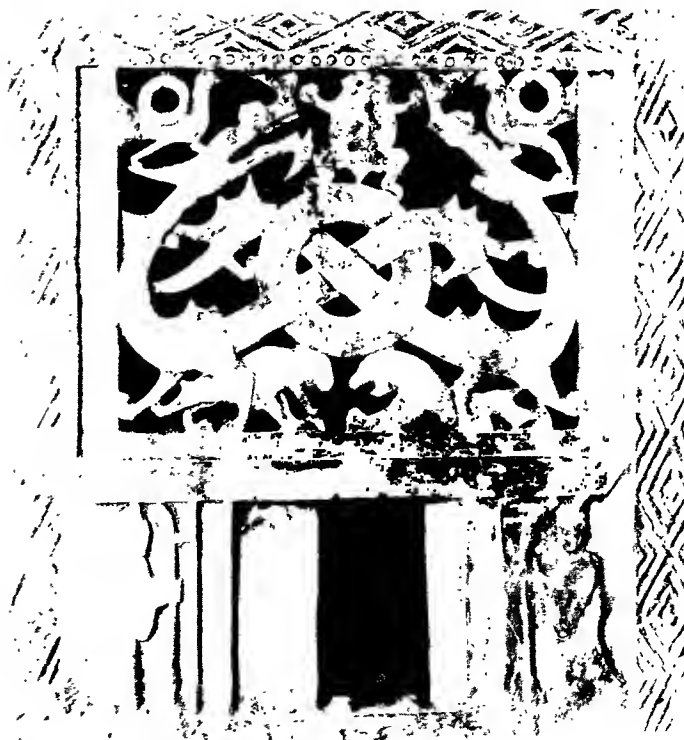
190. Statuette of a dog.



191. Elephant jar.



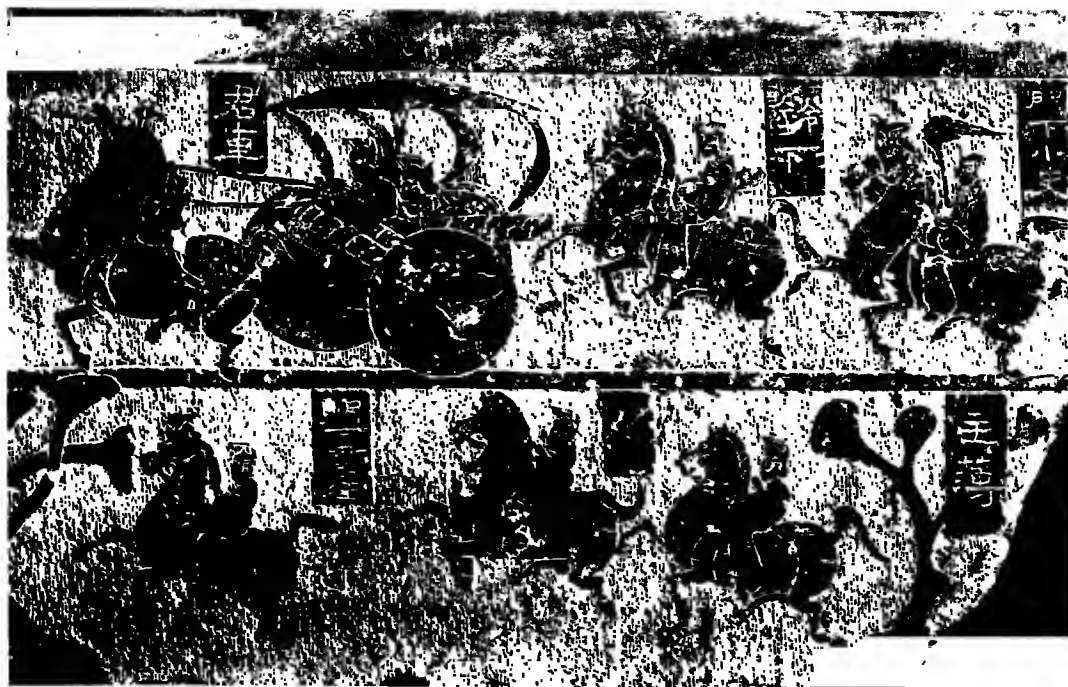
189. Pillar at Fung Huang's tomb.



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194. Relief of a cavalcade.



195. Drawing of two heads.



196. Painted brick.



198. Bust from Hadda.



199. Head from Hadda.



197. Buddhist Indian relief.



200.



201.



202.



203.

Heads from Hadda.



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Coloured stucco figures from Turkestan.

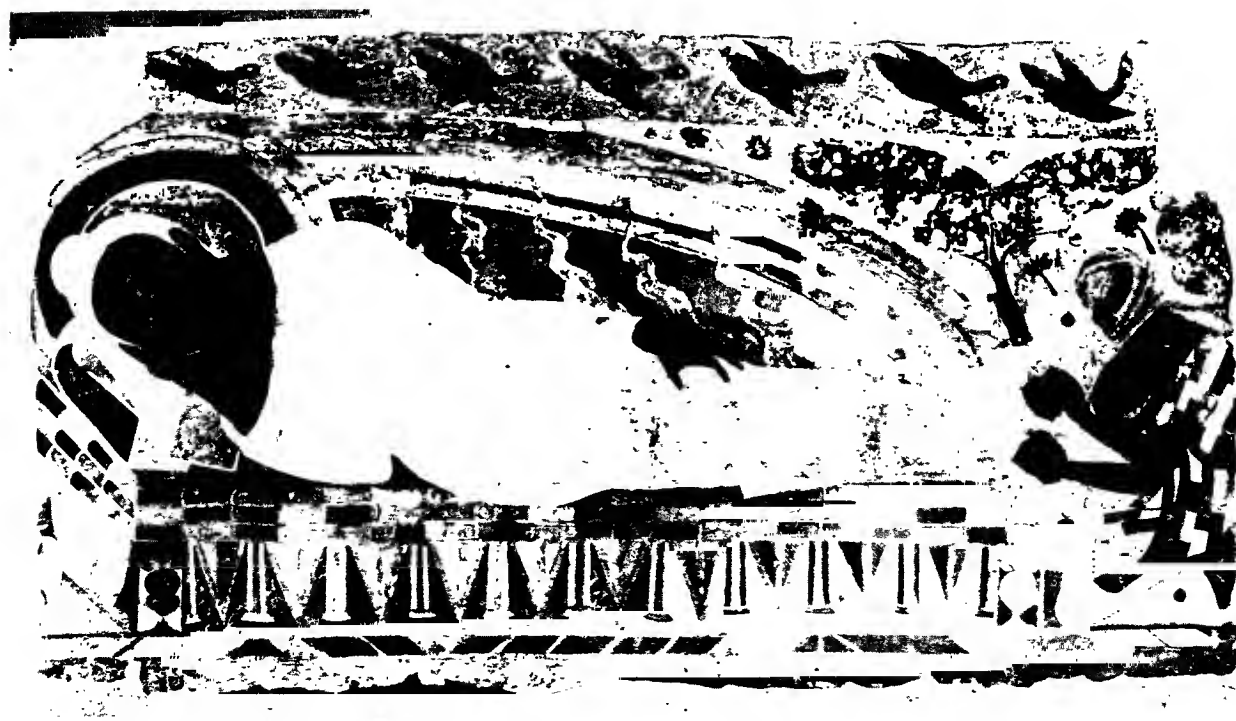


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208. Fresco of the burning of Buddha.





210. Buddha on horseback.



211. Women attendants.



209. Fresco of an Uigur Donor.



212. Fresco of a donor.



213. Central pillar in a Buddhist cave.



214. Central figure of Buddha.



215. Figure of Buddha in a niche.



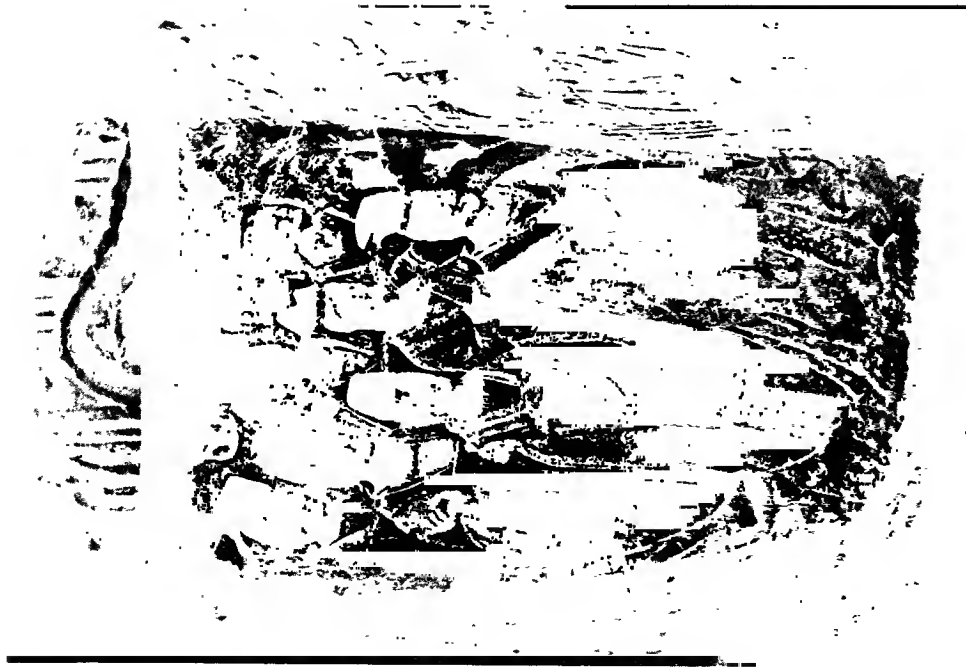
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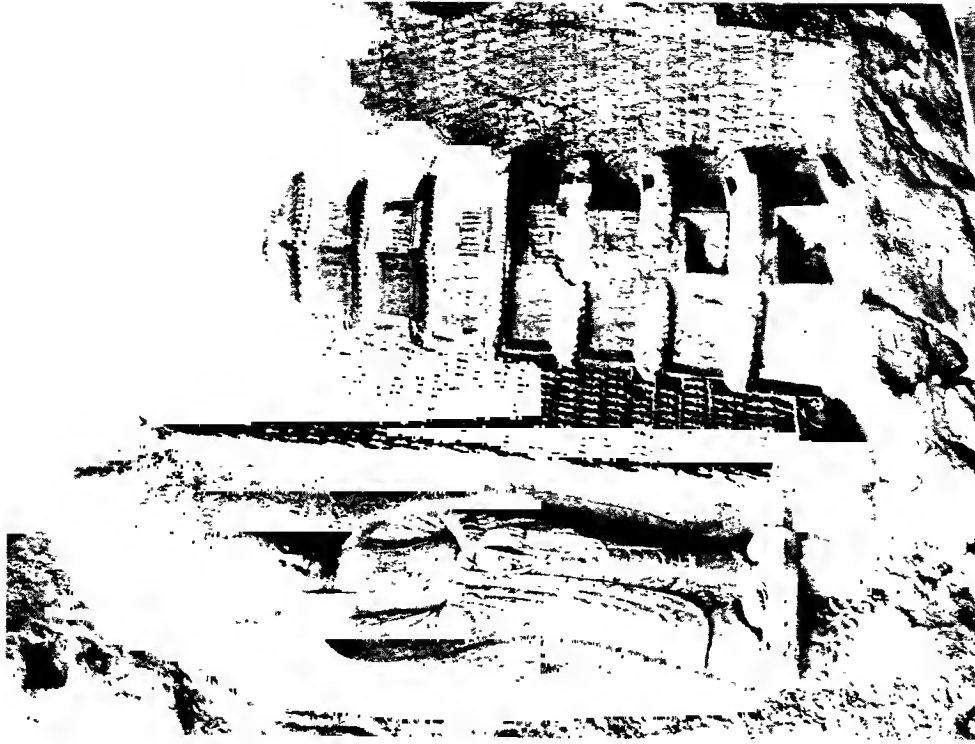
217. Buddha taking leave of his horse.



218. Relief of Buddha and worshippers



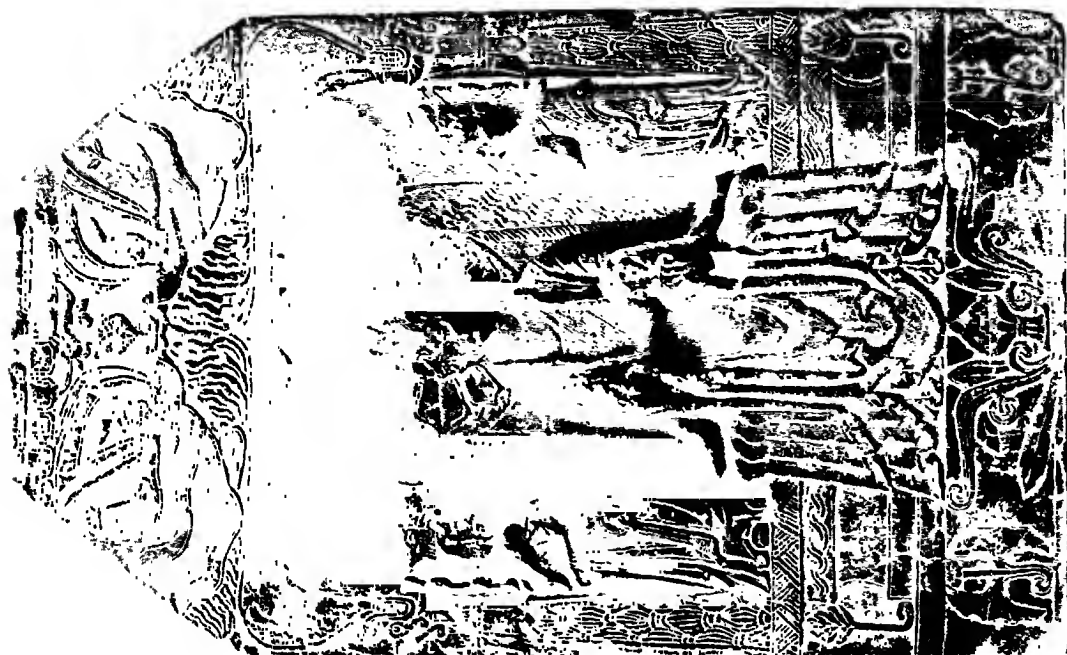
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223. Bronze Buddha.



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\*226. Figure of a Tartar horseman.



229. Sui figure of Buddha beneath the Bodhi tree.



228. Bodhisattva.



\*227. Figure of a camel.





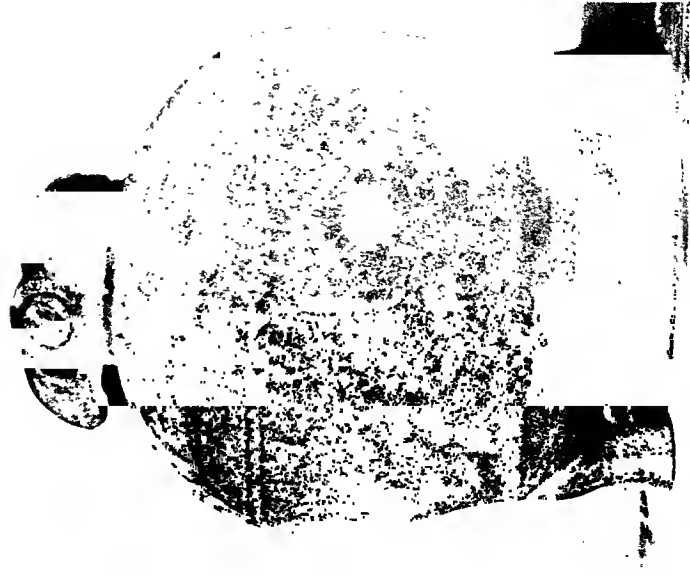
231. Relief of a charger, from Tai Tsung's tomb.



232. Ram's head.



\*230. Tang bronze animals.



233. Owl pot.



\*234. Figure of a horse.



\*235. Figure of a lady on horseback.



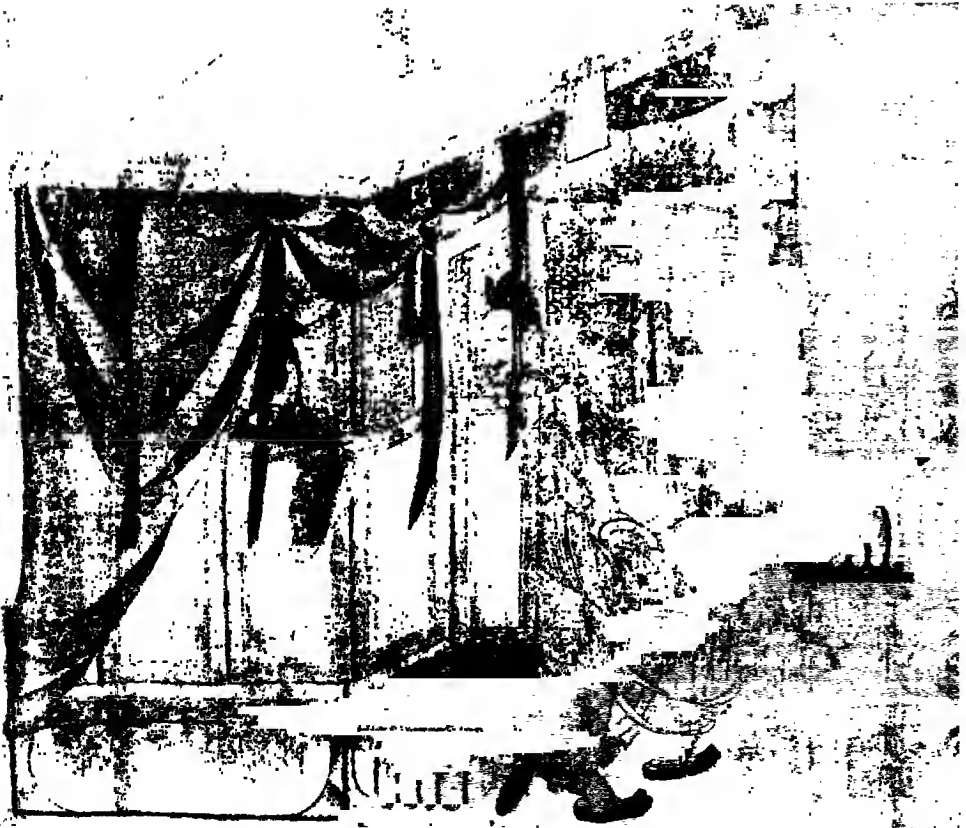
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229. Bedroom scene, from the Ku Kai-shih scroll.



240. Emperor, from the scroll of Thirteen Emperors.



241. Collating the books



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243. An Arhat or Hermit.



244. Fresco from Tun Huang.



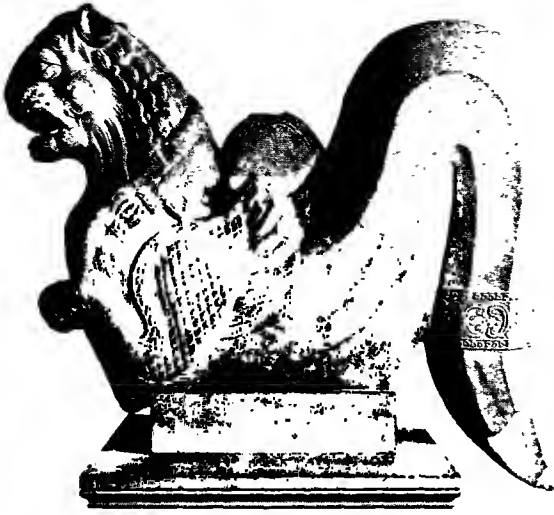
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247 Sung copy of landscape by Wang Wei.



248. Figure from Asoka pillar.

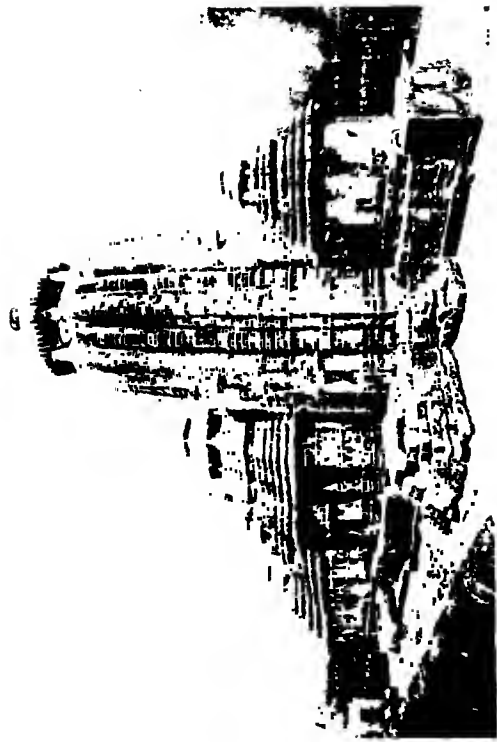


250. Flute-playing divinity.

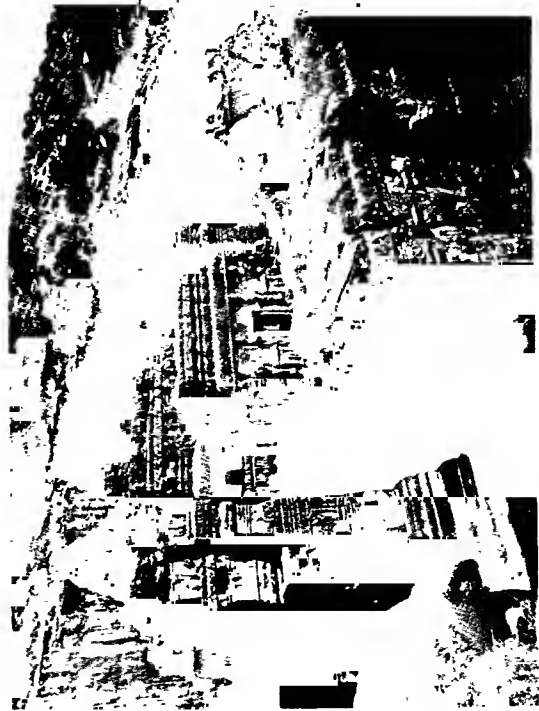


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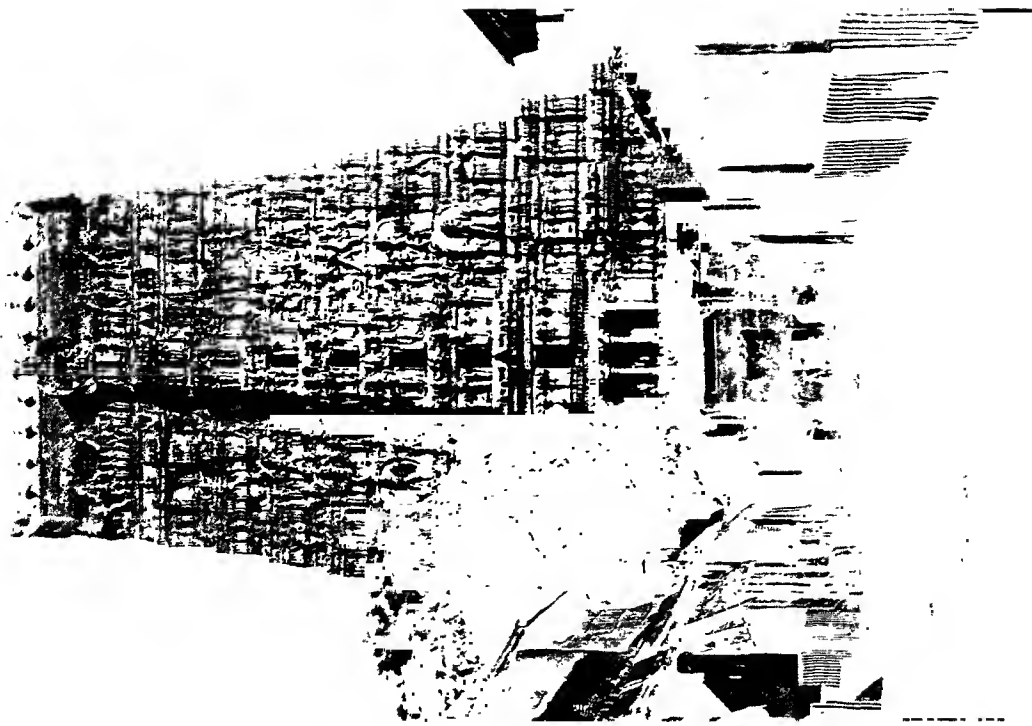




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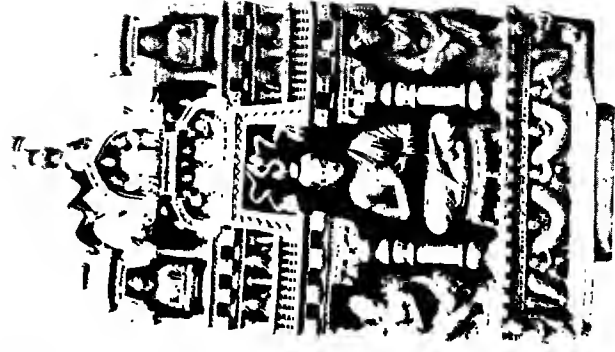
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260. Scene from the Amaravati stupa.



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262. Fresco at Bagh.



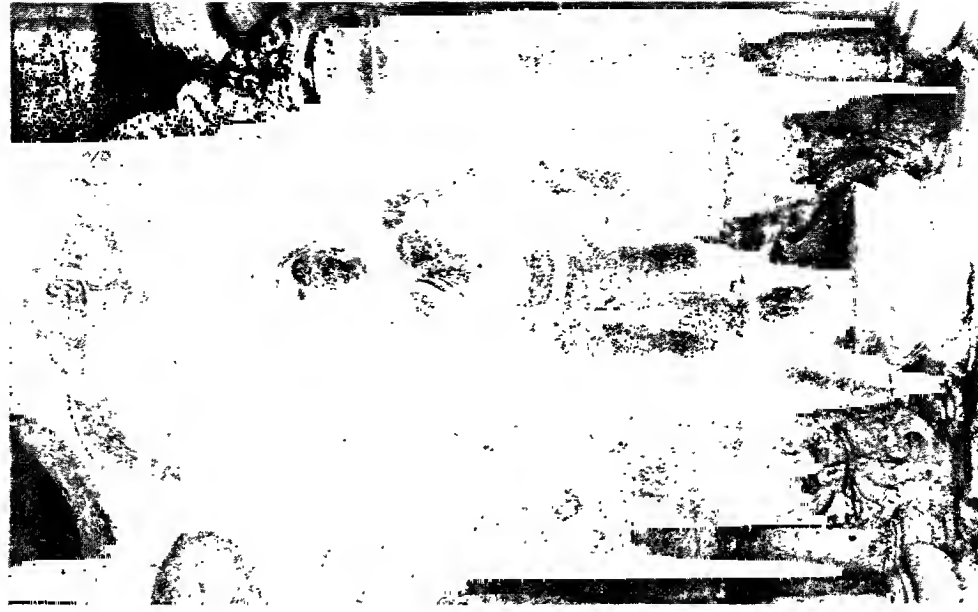
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266. Relief from Ellora.

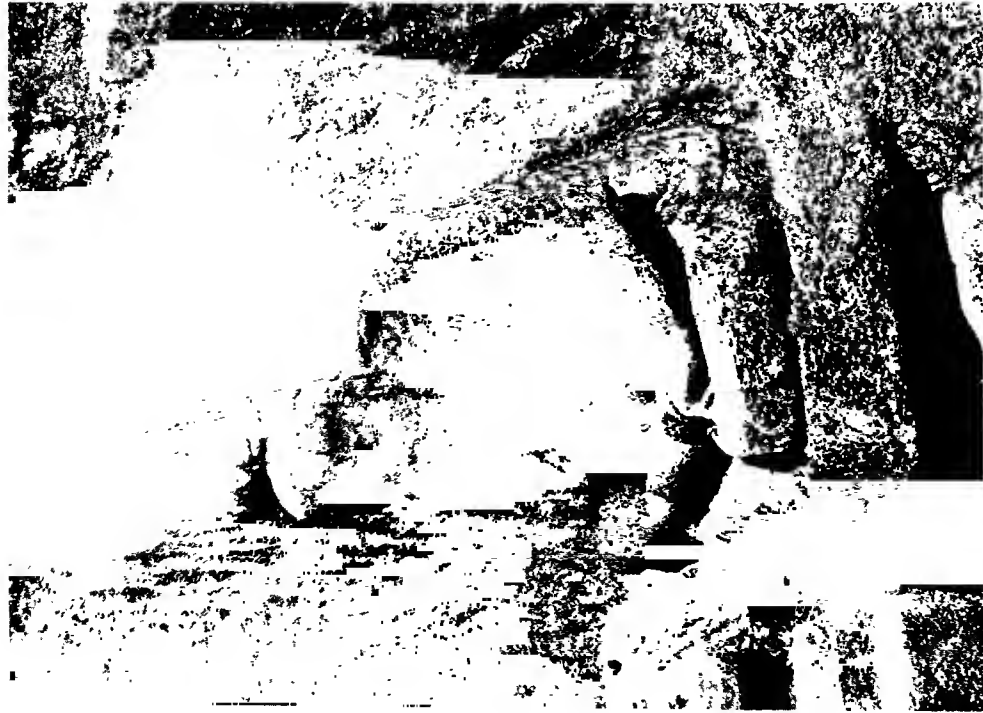


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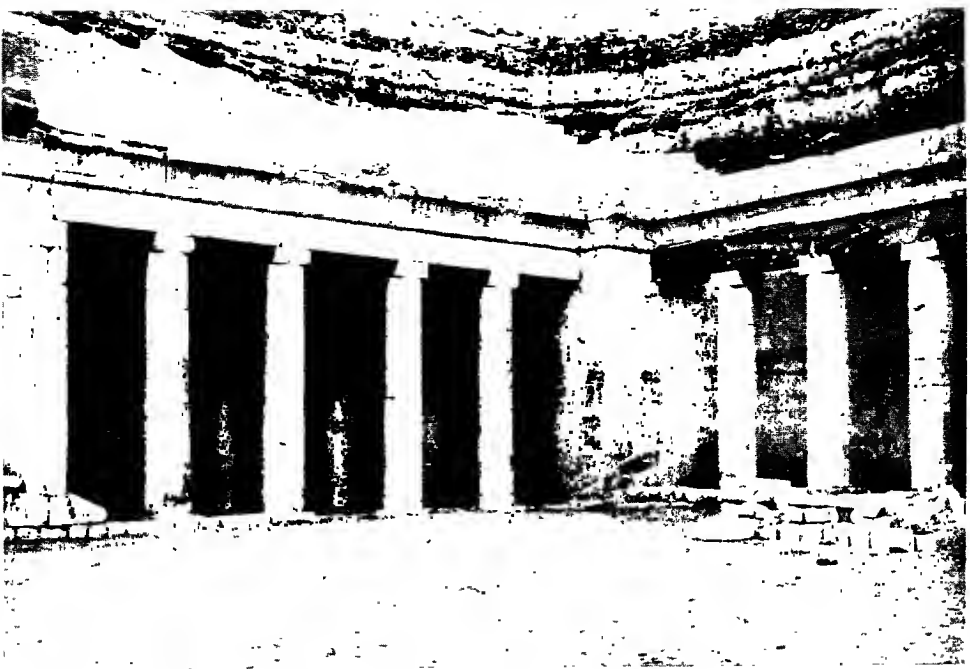
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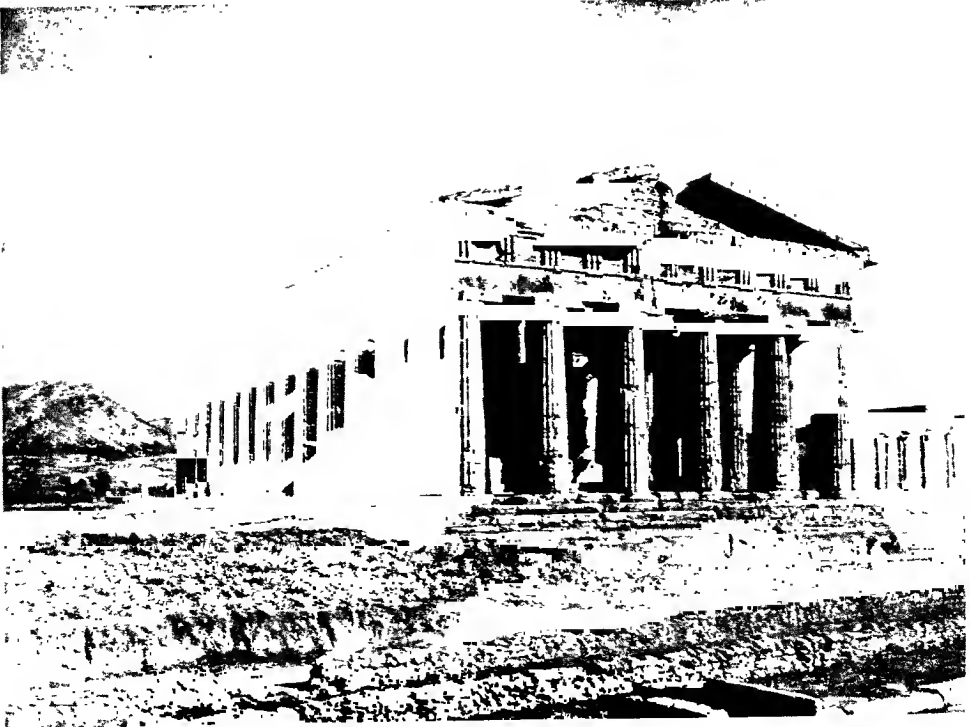
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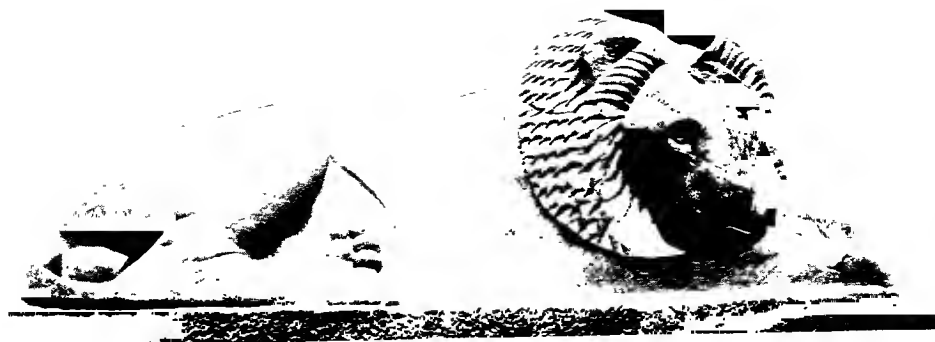
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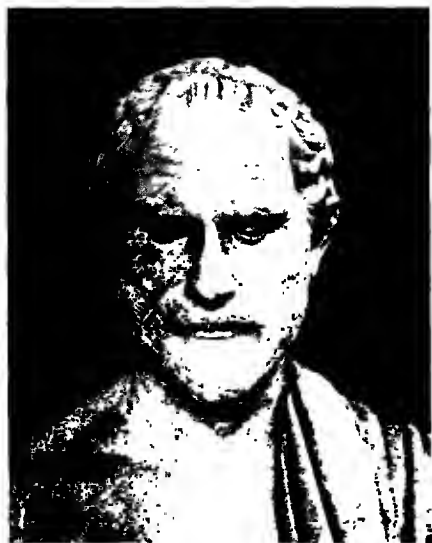




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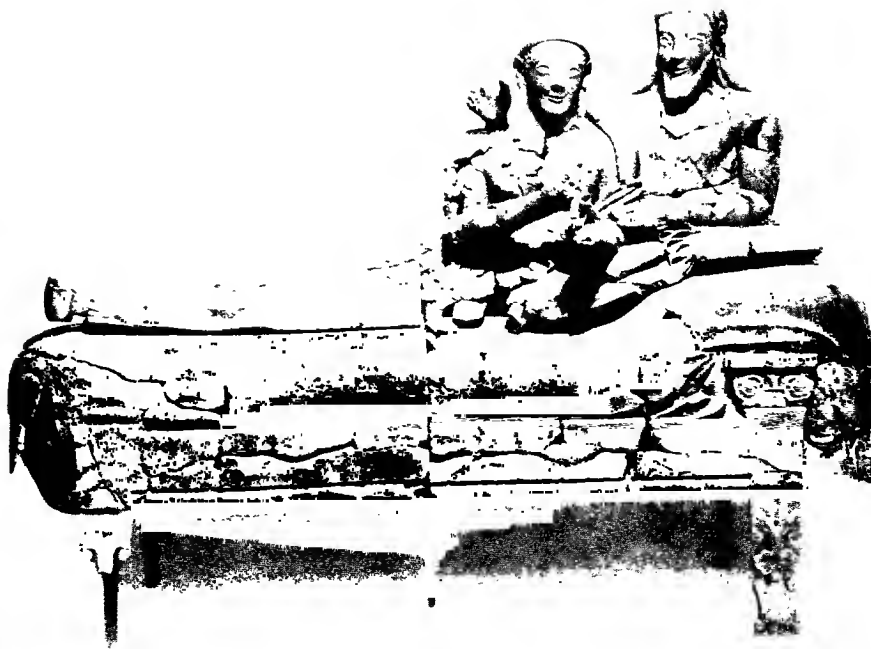
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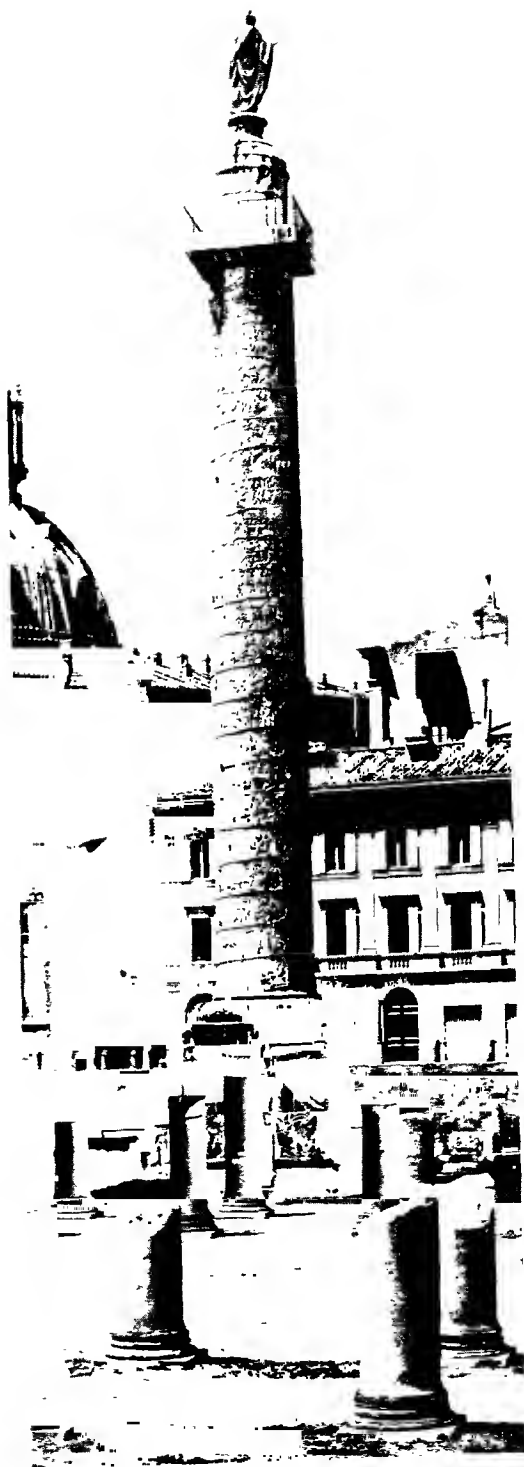
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